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ESSAYS

ON SOME OF THE

DANGERS TO CHRISTIAN FAITH

WHICH MAY ARISE FROM

THE TEACHING OR THE CONDUCT OF ITS PROFESSORS:

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TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED

THREE DISCOURSES

DELIVERED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY

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ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

Οὐ δέδοικα τὸν ἔξω πόλεμον, ὡς τὴν ἔνδον μάχην· ἐπεὶ καὶ ῥίζα, ὅταν ἡ καλῶς ἡρμοσμένη τῇ γῇ, οὐδὲν πείσεται ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνέμων· ἂν δὲ αὐτὴ σαλευήται, σκώληκος τιατρώγοντος αὐτὴν ἔνδοθεν, καὶ μηδενὸς ἐνοχλοῦντος πεσεῖται. Μεχρί τινος τιατρώγομεν τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὴν ῥίζαν, σκωλήκων δίκην; *Chrysostom, Hom. in 2 Cor.* xvii.

"I dread not so much the war without, as the contest within. A root wh well fixed in the earth will not be harmed by the winds; but if it be m unstable itself by a worm gnawing it from within, it will fall even nothing assault it. How long shall we, like a worm, gnaw through the root of the Church?"

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PREFACE.

A CONSIDERABLE part of this volume consists of the substance of several tracts which—at the request of the parties to whom they had been respectively addressed—were published from time to time in the form of pamphlets. A similar request having been made in respect of some others also, hitherto unpublished, it was thought advisable to collect and arrange the whole in a volume, after making such additions and other alterations as seemed requisite.

The work might perhaps have been improved by developing more fully some topics which have been slightly touched on,—by throwing together, into one or more distinct treatises, some of the short detached dissertations, on particular points, which have been appended in the form of notes,—and by more completely changing the style, which was originally adopted with a view to oral delivery. For any imperfections of this kind that may be observed, I hope the reader will accept as an apology, the pressure of avocations which I could not expect to see materially diminished.

For hasty and crude judgments indeed,—for unsound arguments—or for obscurity of language—no excuse, I am aware, ought to be (in respect of a published work) accepted, or offered: but such defects as these—as far, at least, as my endeavours could guard against them—will not, I trust, be found. I would not offer my readers the affront of bringing before them any work,—however hastily *prepared for the press*,—which had not been, both in matter and in expression, subjected to mature reflection and careful revision.

If, in the choice of a subject, I had aimed at obtaining the largest possible share of public favour, I might have fixed on others more likely to be generally acceptable than those principally treated of in the following pages. For as the unbeliever is of course disposed to attribute to the intrinsic character of Christianity—to some valid objections which he supposes to lie against the religion itself—any disgust or hostility towards it that may prevail, so, Christians generally may be expected to be more inclined to look for the cause of this in the perversity of adversaries than in any injudicious conduct of its professors: and again, the Christians who belong to each denomination or religious party, are naturally more disposed to look to the faults of another party than of their own.

But thinking, as I do, that parties the most opposed to each other have, in different ways, contributed to bring danger and discredit to the Faith, I should have felt it to be a sacrifice of duty if I had, for the sake of conciliating one class, confined my attention to the faults of another, and had thus left unnoticed some portion of the errors which appear to me to be, in the present day, the most prevalent and the most important. It is best that both Scylla and Charybdis should be laid down in the same chart.

Although however it would have been unjustifiable to court, at the expense of sincerity, the favour of any class of men, I have endeavoured to avoid giving unnecessary offence to any: and though continuing to keep aloof from every party, I have made it my object to do justice to each, so far as I could conscientiously concur in their views; never aiming to appear, any more than to be, singular in my opinions. This declaration—superfluous, I trust, to those acquainted with my former works—I have been induced to make, in consequence of a tendency prevailing among some who are themselves partizans, to regard as belonging to a party all who have any points of *agreement*,[1] in opinion or in practice; and consequently to assume that any one who keeps clear of all religious parties,

[1] See Eden's *Theological Dictionary*, Article *Disciples*.

is to be understood (if not indifferent to religion altogether) as *standing alone* in his religious views: or as wavering and "halting between two opinions;" or waiting—like the Bat in the Fable—to join whichever party prevails. As naturalists are accustomed to "establish" (as their expression is) a "Genus or Order" of animals, on the ground of certain points of *resemblance*, without meaning to imply that the animals thus grouped are accustomed to *congregate* and herd together, so, the persons I am speaking of establish—as it may be called—parties; classing men together in supposed parties, on the ground of some *coincidence* of opinion; and keeping out of sight—as unimportant, or as a thing to be taken for granted—that *mutual bond*, and co-operation towards common objects[1] which are essential to the idea of a party in the received sense of the word. According to such a view, a party might conceivably consist entirely of men ignorant of the opinions, and even of the existence, of each other.

But I must protest against such a use of language, as both unwarranted,—being at variance with established usage,—and mischievous, as representing that there is only the alternative of two great evils; that of joining a *religious party*, and that of aiming at *sin-*

[1] See Essay III. of this vol. § 1, pp. 66, 67.

gularity, and rejecting every opinion that is held by any one else.

In fact, so far is it from being true that the adoption by several persons, of the same views, on sincere conviction, and not in deference to one another's authority, constitutes them a party, that, on the contrary, party-spirit is the *most* decidedly and strongly shown in respect of those points wherein men do NOT coincide in their judgments, but make mutual *sacrifices* of their respective opinions; just as the Roman Triumvirs sacrificed, each, some of his own friends to the joint Proscription.

Far as I am however from any wish to oppose or to differ from others, and accustomed to look, in the first instance, rather for points of agreement than of disagreement, I am sensible that no one who finds himself obliged to express disapprobation of any prevailing doctrines, practices, or modes of expression, can hope to escape,—even by "speaking the truth in love"—a certain degree of disfavour. And more censure may be anticipated from those—if there should be any such—whose inward conviction is not strong, of the truth of the principles, and the soundness of the arguments, which they think it right, for the supposed benefit of the multitude, to maintain. Men who are sincerely and firmly convinced of what

they maintain, are often found to perceive no force in any arguments on the opposite side, and to be so confident in the strength of their position, as to feel little or no resentment against assailants;[1] while those who do feel the force of a reason, when they are resolved against admitting the conclusion, are in general proportionably displeased at its being urged.

If any of those who are accustomed to use language like that which I have felt myself bound to censure as tending to encourage wrong and dangerous notions, —if there be any of these who sincerely disclaim those notions, I can most truly say that I shall always hear with the highest satisfaction such a disclaimer; and that I trust they also, if ingenuously aiming at the inculcation of truth, will be, on the whole, not displeased, but the contrary, at having an opportunity of explaining their real meaning, and of guarding against the erroneous conclusions which their expressions have been found to favour.

It was when this volume (in the first edition) was nearly through the press, that Professor Powell's *Tradition Unveiled*—a work which appears to me to display in a high degree his usual ability and candour —first came into my hands. My reason for here

[1] Ἐπιεικὰν δὲ σφόδρα δίωνται . . οὐ φρονεῖ ὅσα. —Arist. *Rhet.* book ii. c. 2.

mentioning it, is, that as the author has treated of several of the points which have been also noticed in the following pages, I have thought it right to apprise the reader, that any coincidence or discrepancy between us, as to any of those points, is purely accidental, as far as relates to the two works in question; neither of which was known to the author of the other.

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ESSAY I.

ON

THE DANGERS

ARISING FROM CERTAIN

INJUDICIOUS MODES OF PREACHING.

ESSAY I.

ON THE DANGERS ARISING FROM CERTAIN INJUDICIOUS MODES OF PREACHING.

Causes of aversion to Christianity referable to two classes: some are averse to it from its real character, p. 3.; some from misapprehension of it.

§ 1. A DISINCLINATION towards some system, theory, or practical rule, that is really just and valuable, may arise from either of two causes; from a misapprehension of the system itself;—its being viewed as different from what it really is: or again, from its opposition to some human passions or prejudices.

Christianity is exposed to both these causes of aversion; operating not only on different individuals, but sometimes—each in a certain degree—on the same person. Some disregard, or dislike, or reject Christianity, from its being at variance with their inclinations and habits; others, from their conceiving it to be something different from what it is. As to the former class, the aversion or indifference to the Gospel, resulting from human faults and weaknesses, has been often treated of. The other class, the misapprehensions of the character of Christianity occasioned by the mistakes, or by the indiscreet expressions of its teachers, is a subject less attended to, but not less deserving of attention. The prejudices against Christianity thence arising are not only of very serious consequence, but—what is still more to the present purpose—are such as it is peculiarly incumbent on christian instructors to guard against.

On this subject, then, it is that I propose now to offer some remarks. It is one which demands the more careful attention, not only from its intrinsic importance, but also from the peculiar circumstances of the Age in which we live. These are times in which less is felt than formerly of that prescriptive veneration for *existing* institutions, as such, which has so often supplied the place of deliberate preference. No one can tell what weight of numbers, or of power, physical or moral, may, before long, be thrown into the scale of the adversaries, either of Christianity altogether, or of our own Church. And our teaching accordingly has, and is likely to have, less of extraneous support to rest upon, humanly speaking, than in ordinary times, and is left very much to the judgments that men may form of its truth and intrinsic value. It is on this account that I would suggest the reflection how peculiarly it behoves us, now, to be careful to "cut off occasion from them that seek occasion of cavil or quarrel;"[1] to guard against everything that may seem to justify complaint or reproach; and not only to maintain what is good, but to "take heed that our good be not evil spoken of."

It may be answered, that all regard to what may be said or thought of us, can furnish but a secondary motive; and that if we are but duly anxious for the diffusion of divine truth, and the saving of men's souls, we shall have no need to resort to any secondary motive to exertion, or to trouble ourselves about any other object. And certainly, as far as relates merely to our own credit and character, either as individuals or as a body—as far as *we* alone are concerned, our chief care should be to guard against the encroachments of so very inferior a principle of action as a regard for the opinions of men;—to watch

[1] Preface to Book of Common Prayer.

vigilantly against the besetting self-deceit of pursuing our own glory, and calling it the glory of God. A wish to escape the censure and obtain the approbation of our fellow-creatures, is a propensity which, though we are not called upon to extirpate it, (that being, I conceive, impossible,) we should yet repress, *as if* we did wish to extirpate it; quite secure that when we have checked it to the utmost of our power, we shall not fail to have enough of it left.

But it is of quite another thing that I am speaking. Care to avoid leading or leaving men to mistake truth for falsehood — care to place no stumbling-block in the way of the weak or the incautious among our own hearers, and to give no handle to adversaries—watchfulness against every thing that may be a hindrance to the reception, and the profitable reception, of evangelical truth—all this, is very different from seeking our own credit for its own sake. And if an especial attention to these points in "days of rebuke and blasphemy,"—a vigilant care to "abstain from all *appearance* of evil," lest we should bring a discredit on our religion—if this is to be regarded as at all a *secondary* motive, it is at least one which the apostles thought it right repeatedly to inculcate: "having your conversation honest" (says Peter) "among the Gentiles; that *whereas they speak against you as evil-doers*, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God."

Now, as far as *personal* good works are concerned—a *life* pure not only from evil, but from all appearance of evil—this precept belongs alike to all *Christians*, whether Clergy or Laity:—whether givers or receivers of instruction. But what I now have in view more particularly is the application of the precept to those engaged in *teaching*. We are bound to consider what impression our instruction is likely to make, not only on the most attentive, and right-minded, and best-educated hearers, but also on those less considerate, less informed, and less candid. And we

should consider also not only what may be truly, but what may be plausibly, urged against the delineation we present of evangelical religion;—prepared, not, of course, to sacrifice to the fear of giving offence anything that really belongs to our religion, but, for the sake of all parties, to obviate, as far as possible, any misconceptions of it:—not to omit any part of what is good, but to "give no offence in anything."

Apparently immoral tendency of some views of Christianity.

§ 2. Let us suppose, for instance, that Christianity generally, or our particular view of it, should be charged by the adversaries either of the one or the other, with being a system unfavourable to morality, and as such deserving to be discountenanced by the civil magistrate; on the ground that it tends to withdraw attention from what is right and wrong in conduct, and leads men to expect divine favour through the correctness of their decision on certain points of belief, and through the strength of their faith in what has been done for them; and to relieve their minds from the reproaches of natural conscience, by a general confession of the universal depravity of human nature, and of the utter worthlessness and vileness of all that men call virtue and righteousness; with a specious acknowledgment indeed that good works are the proper fruit of faith, but with a sort of practical dispensation (in cases of difficulty and strong temptation) from the bringing forth of those fruits, on account of the frailty and corruption of Man's nature; or, at least with a confidence that the tree will not fail to bring forth its fruits without any *care* on our part; and that consequently we have only to take care of the faith, in full assurance that holiness of life *will* follow, without any special attention bestowed on that point: so that the morality of the Christian religion comes to be regarded, at best, as something suitable rather than indispensable; and as something rather to be passively waited for, than diligently cultivated; and men's only sedulous

attention is concentrated on the rectitude of their belief, the confidence of their hopes, and the fervour of their devotions.

I have given a strong, but not at all an overcharged statement of one kind of objection which has been urged, and *will* be urged, again and again, by the opponents of evangelical religion. The question for *us* to consider is, not whether *they* are sincere or insincere,—fair or unfair in their imputations: *that* is *their* concern: nor is it sufficient for us to inquire of ourselves whether we are personally immoral in practice, or antinomian in creed: that is our concern as *individual Christians;* but as christian *instructors* it behoves us to consider whether we are taking due care to guard against a misconstruction of our teaching by the weak and ignorant, which we might have avoided without any compromise of truth. It is for us to consider in all cases not merely whether others are to blame, but whether we are ourselves fairly blameless.

Now in respect of the particular point before us, it is certain that our Lord and his apostles, did not content themselves with simply declaring the connection of christian faith with moral conduct, and then bestowing all their culture on the tree, leaving that to bring forth its own fruits as a matter of course; but insisted earnestly and frequently on the *care* and *exertion* requisite both in respect of a christian life generally, and of several particular points of duty; and sedulously guarded their hearers against deceiving themselves on this point. For where there is (as appears to be the case here) a natural tendency to some particular self-deceit, it is far from being enough merely to abstain from fostering the error, without taking pains to repress it; and to satisfy ourselves with merely not feeding a fire which is spontaneously kindled and kept up. "Why call ye me," says our Saviour, "Lord! Lord! and do not the things which I say?" "Be ye doers of the word," says the apostle James, "and not hearers only,

deceiving your own selves." "Little children," says the apostle John, "let no man *deceive* you: he that doeth righteousness, is righteous." Jesus again, when teaching his disciples, that He is the true vine, of which they are the branches, and that "without Him they can do nothing," is careful to add "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit: every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away; and every branch in me that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." [1] And in a like strain are the continual exhortations and warnings which the apostle Paul thought it requisite to give, and to direct Timothy and Titus to give, "in order," says he, "that they who have believed in God may be *careful* to maintain good works."

It appears then that, from some cause or other, there was a danger, in the time of the apostles, of men's losing sight of all this:—a danger, I mean, not merely of their being hurried into sin by strong temptation, or living in utter thoughtlessness about their religion, but also, of their being deceived into some notion of being religious without virtue. And since this was the case in the apostles' days, we ought at least not too hastily to conclude that there can be no such danger now.

In fact, there always has been, in every age, and always will be, while human nature continues, a liability to self-deceit on this point:—something quite distinct from our proneness to live in a total disregard of duty, or to offend *against* the suggestions of conscience:—a tendency to *satisfy* and quiet the conscience, by placing the whole of religious duty in something altogether apart from moral conduct.

The piety, for instance, of the ancient Heathen, had, we know, in general, little or no connexion with morality: and

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[1] John xv. 1—3. The connexion between καθαίρει (purgeth) and καθαροί (clean) is kept out of sight in the common translation.

indeed was quite as often connected with gross immorality.[1] The Jews again, were, as we know from the best authority, prone to place their religion in ceremonial observances, and "omit the weightier matters of the Law." This was *their* mode of "establishing their own righteousness," and satisfying the claims of religion without morality of life. And the Christians again of the apostles' times, needed, we find, to be earnestly warned against the danger of being content to "continue in sin that grace might abound," and of satisfying themselves with a faith-without-works, which "is dead, being alone."

Should we therefore flatter ourselves that, in these days, we and our hearers are safe from any like danger, we should be only the more exposed to it, through careless security.

Misapprehension of some passages of Scripture.

§ 3. The danger, in respect of the point now before us, to which the Christian is exposed, arises from the misapprehension or misapplication of several passages of the New Testament.

You will not fail to recollect very many, such as may be, and have been, so interpreted as to be at variance with all those exhortations to good works, which abound in the sacred writers.

When Paul tells his hearers that "we are justified by faith, without the works of the Law;"—that he "desires to be found not having his own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ;"[2]—that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, that God hath saved us;"[3]—that "being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life:"[4]—when these and

[1] See *Sermons delivered in Dublin*, pp. 5, 6. Also *Thoughts on Moral Instruction*, a charge delivered in 1852: and likewise two very able and useful discourses, by the Rev. Dr. Fitzgerald, and Rev. C. Wolseley.

[2] Phil. iii. [3] Titus iii. [4] Titus iii.

numberless other declarations to the same effect, in various places, are set forth (which undoubtedly they ought to be) as the very basis of evangelical religion, it is evidently a possible thing—for we know that it has actually taken place—that men should make such an application of these passages, as to pay little or no regard to moral conduct, at least as having anything to do with the gospel-salvation. And there is a danger, that even if they do not go so far as to consider virtue and vice as entirely indifferent in God's sight, or even if they are not so exclusively on the watch against that trust in merits of their own, which, in the language of some writers, is called "self-righteousness," (meaning, "self-justification,") as to guard against it by practising no righteousness at all, they may yet be so disproportionately occupied with the dread of the one danger, as to take little or no precaution against the other; so *careful* of not *trusting* to their good works, as not to be sufficiently (as Paul directs us) "careful to *maintain* good works."

Men are however often taught that "nothing we can do can *further* our salvation:" and though this is true in one sense, namely that no virtuous conduct of Man's can have any intrinsic claim to reward, independently of divine promise, yet if the proposition is broadly stated without any qualifying explanation, most hearers will not fail to draw the antinomian inference. For, if (they will say) my *doing* so and so does not further my salvation, my *omitting* to do it, cannot hinder my salvation: and if my *abstaining* from a certain act has no tendency to forward my salvation, my *doing* the act cannot endanger my salvation.

The distinction, if there be any, is such as can never be made clear to ordinary readers.

And if we will submit to take pattern from the inspired writers, we find *them*, while always representing eternal life as the free "gift of God," yet also representing God as "not *unrighteous* to forget our labour of love."

The want of *care* as to moral conduct is a danger men are much more exposed to than that of rejecting moral virtue altogether, as having nothing to do with Christianity. This,—the Antinomian doctrine,—is far from being either commonly taught, or generally acceptable; and, considering the sinfulness of the human heart, it is very remarkable that this should be the case. Certain it is, however, that the generality of men are shocked and disgusted at being plainly taught that no sin a man commits, can at all endanger his salvation; and that the practice of any virtue does not render him at all the more acceptable to God. There are, it seems, certain notions of right and wrong implanted by the Creator in the human mind; (alluded to by Paul, in Ep. to Rom. ii. 14, and elsewhere)[1] which are such, till depraved by a long course of wickedness, that, though insufficient to produce great exertion in the performance of duty, or to resist temptation to do wrong, they yet, in the absence of temptation, disincline men to regard moral good and evil with total indifference, or to conceive that God can do so. Moreover, there is no one, probably, however lax in his morals, who does not believe himself to possess at least *some* good quality which many persons want; or who lives, and believes himself to live, in the commission of *every* sin. Even a man of immoral character, accordingly, is, in general, not well pleased to be taught that any instance of his good conduct (or which he thinks to be such) gives him no advantage over one whose conduct, in the same point, has been bad; or that his having abstained from any crime, does not at all raise him (except as far as worldly success may be concerned) above the level of one who has committed that crime. Men even of a very low tone of morality usually retain, and wish to retain, such a

[1] This is denied by Dr. Paley, in the work which has long been a text-book in one of our Universities. The erroneousness (as it appears to me) of this view, I have set forth in *Lessons on Morals*. It is a remarkable circumstance that Dr. Paley's doctrine is, in substance, maintained (under the title of "Total Corruption") by a party, who are very far from approving of his views in other points.

portion of approbation of what is good, and disapprobation of evil, as to think the better of themselves for anything that is good in them, and the worse of their neighbour for any vice of his, from which they are themselves exempt.

Be the cause, however, what it may, the fact is certain, that plain, open, thorough-going, Antinomian doctrine is not generally popular, even with men of depraved character.

Much greater is the danger (as I have already remarked) of men's falling *practically* into a careless inattention to their moral conduct, than of their theoretically maintaining that moral conduct is a matter of indifference. Error is ever the more dangerous, the more it is mixed up with truth. Now, it is most true, and a truth of great importance, that "good works"—*external actions* of any kind—so far from having any claim to be considered as meritorious, are not, properly, to be regarded as even intrinsically *virtuous*. Even the heathen moralists distinctly taught that it is the *disposition* of the agent that alone can, in strict language, be called virtuous or vicious; the same act sometimes being either morally good, or bad, or indifferent, according to the *motive*.[1] And it is true also that even the best moral *dispositions and habits* can claim no reward as a matter of right, at the hands of Him "from whom cometh every good and perfect gift"—of Him "from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed." The branch cannot boast itself independent of the vine which affords it all its nourishment—even Christ; on whose body we are engrafted, through faith, and by whom we are enabled to bring forth fruit.[2]

But if any one, while he dwells continually, and very strongly, (as we certainly ought to do,) on justification through faith, and on the total impossibility of our being able to merit and earn, either wholly, or in part, eternal

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[1] *Arist. Eth. Nicom.* B. ii. [2] John xv. 5.

happiness, by any good works of our own, even could we lead a life of sinless virtue, and on the consequent necessity of renouncing all claims founded on our own righteousness, and of prostrating ourselves in all humility of soul before the cross of Christ;—if, I say, while the Christian is earnestly occupied with these doctrines, and is labouring daily to impress on himself and his hearers the impossibility of our doing anything that can purchase salvation, he is content, at the same time, with a slight occasional hint that this doctrine is *not irreconcilable* with the moral precepts of Christ and his apostles,—if he is satisfied with just inserting an incidental salvo, by saying, in substance, that notwithstanding the utter worthlessness of our good works, nevertheless, it is to be expected that a sincere Christian will lead a moral life;—if, I say, this disproportionate inattention be shewn, with respect to the practical "fruits of the Spirit," a very great danger will result, of men's substituting a mere approbation of christian virtue in the abstract, for the practical exemplification of it in their lives;—a danger that, while they admit, in theory, the obligations of virtue, they will not comply, practically, with the apostle's direction to "be *careful* to maintain good works."[1]

It was evidently his design, as well as his blessed Master's, that Christians should *exert* themselves to "walk worthy of their vocation;"—should "give *diligence*," (as Peter exhorts them,) "to make their calling and election sure;"—should "*watch*, that they enter not into temptation;"—should "*run*, that they may obtain;"—should "*strive* to enter in at the strait gate;"—should "*work* out their own salvation, with fear and trembling;"—and "casting aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, should run with *patience* the race set before them." The apostles expected, not that the Christian should be a *good* man *notwithstanding*

[1] Tit. iii. 8. See Discourse i., sec. 1., for some remarks on an interpretation of Romans vii., which has a tendency towards practical antinomianism.

his being justified through faith, but that he should be the *better* man in *consequence* of his faith; not only acting on better motives than those who were not Christians, but also acting better,—"glorifying his heavenly Father by bringing forth much fruit," and by letting his "light so shine before men, that all might see his good works," and thence be led to glorify Him also.

But a different kind of teaching from this is often found to be popular; though plain Antinomian teaching is not. There are many who, like Felix, will be ready to "hear you concerning the faith in Christ," but "when you reason of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come," will be alarmed and uneasy, and be disposed to bid you "go your way for this time!" Anything that leads, or that leaves men,—without distinctly rejecting christian virtue,—to feel little anxiety and take little pains about it;—anything which, though perhaps not so meant, is liable to be so understood, by those who have the wish, as to leave them without any feeling of real shame, or mortification, or alarm, on account of their own faults and moral deficiencies, so as to make them anxiously watchful *only* against seeking salvation *by* good works, and not at all, against seeking salvation *without* good works—all this is likely to be much more acceptable to the corrupt disposition of "the natural man," than such teaching as that of our Lord and his apostles. And many of my readers probably will have met with instances of such incautious language as I am alluding to. I have myself heard a preacher tell his hearers, that "the Elect should grieve indeed for the sins of the world, but not for their own; since God suffers his People to fall into very grievous sins, expressly to keep them humble!" And this is the language of a sermon, preached and published at Oxford, some years ago, and which was approved by persons who have since held high offices in the Church: "God sees no sin in believers, because there is none in believers before Him; and though feeling, sense, and reason, tell him that it is *not* so, yet the word of God tells

him that it *is* so; and, indeed, reason itself must confess this, that if there were any sin in believers before the face of God, God must behold it; but if God does not behold it, then there is none. Now the word of God (Numb. xxiii. 21) plainly says, "*God hath not beheld iniquity in his (justified) Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in his (believing) Israel.*" . . . "The believer, by God's imputation, is truly a fulfiller of the Law. And it is fulfilled, not actively by our legal workings, for no man hath ever so done, and so it is not said *by us;* but it is fulfilled evangelically and passively, but no less truly, and therefore it is said *in us;* wherefore also it is said by Paul, *He that loveth,* which love is that by which faith worketh, *hath fulfilled the law.*" . . . . "And whereas the believer by faith hath made this righteousness his own, it is utterly impossible that he should want any other. . . . . Therefore as many of us as trust in Christ, being thus clothed, are not only counted, but made, perfectly righteous and holy, without any spot or blemish of sin in the sight of God. And this is food for our faith to feed upon; for whereas by reason of sin remaining in us (for 'if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves'), the Devil tempts us to believe through the medium of our feeling, that God takes notice, and is angry with us, on account of sin; on the other hand, God comes in plainly and forcibly with his word of truth, and says not only "*I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob,* but by one offering my Son *hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*"[1]

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[1] Most of what was said in that sermon was only repetitions of statements long current in books highly popular among many religious persons: in which one will find it broadly laid down, that "no demerit on the part of believers can arise to defeat the operations of God's grace;"—(Hawker's *Zion's Pilgrim*, p. 60;) that "the present Life is not a Life of probation or trial," (ibid.); that "the Will of God to do good to his children does not depend on their will, or their faithfulness, or on any thing in themselves:" (Romaine, *Walk of Faith*, p. 258;) that "as it was not any loveliness in Elect persons which moved God to love them at first, so neither shall their unlovely backslidings deprive them of it:" (Coles *on God's Sovereignty*, p. 294;) that "the Covenant of peace is not to be overthrown by trials, temptations, or *Sins*. So far from it, that *these* prove its stability and certainty:" (Hill's *Deep Things of God*, p. 201;) that "Corruption has a tyrannizing power in the greatest Saint: and falls into sin are not falls from grace:" (p. 195;) that "the righteousness of Christ is more than imputed to the believer; and that all the Elect really wrought

Again, I have been present when the question was discussed, whether a person who had grievously injured another, and afterwards came to a due sense of his fault, was not bound to do his utmost to *repair*, as far as was possible, the evil done; and it was urged, on the negative side, that "after all, *we are not to be saved by our good works!*"

And I have heard it alleged, in vindication of such doctrine, that the persons teaching it, are themselves of blameless life. But this makes them *doubly* dangerous, by giving greater currency to such principles as may be harmless to *them*, but likely to be so followed out by others, as to lead to most pernicious results in practice. The parent or Preacher may be safe; the children and the flock may be poisoned.

It is reported of Mithridates that he had so fortified his constitution by the habitual use of an antidote, that, when designing to kill himself, the poison would not act. So it is with those who, after they have acquired a habit of virtuous exertion and diligent self-examination, adopt a certain doctrine capable of an Antinomian sense, but which *may* be explained away. Such persons are like the nettle-roots, which themselves sting not, but bear stinging leaves.

Such doctrines however may prove, with some, the most popular. But the apostles would have counted it treason to their Master, in themselves, or in us, to be "men-pleasers," seeking what may be most acceptable to the hearers, rather

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"out a perfect righteousness in Christ:" (p. 153;) that "Repentance, being a change of mind, cannot be eradicated from the believer by any falls into Sin; and his state Godward is not affected by his falls, though his peace will be much affected," (p. 75.) That "it is the glory of the Gospel, that it sets the believer free from all condemnation, whether from the law, sin, death, hell, or the grave: and that none of his transgressions, however great or aggravated, or whether before or after his conversion, shall ever be laid to his charge, seeing they were all laid upon Christ in the everlasting Covenant, and blotted out by him before they were committed," (p. 41.) That "although a believer may commit the same sins as an unbeliever, yea greater for the matter of them, yet the believer's person, being screened from the curse of the Law, cannot come under condemnation, even though the actings of repentance should be for a time suspended," (p. 34.) And that "there is not a moment in which *every believer* does not appear before God as pure and spotless as the blood of Christ can make him; yea, as pure as the immaculate Lamb himself," (p. 19.)

than most profitable; or shrinking, through fear of unpopularity, from "setting before them *all* the counsel of God." And it would be very rash for us of the present day, to imagine that we can with safety pass slightly over the points which the apostles found it necessary to dwell on with such continual watchfulness, and frequent and earnest repetition. For, the liability of the human heart to self-deceit in what relates to moral duty, was not peculiar to their times. And we are bound not merely to *reconcile* together the several parts of their teaching, but to shew the close *connexion* of those different parts, where the writers themselves evidently perceived such connexion. If we were to explain that a life abounding in good works is *not inconsistent* with faith in Christ, we should be far from coming up to their meaning; which is, that the one springs naturally and necessarily from the other, and that both, and each, must be sedulously attended to;—that "the branch" (to use our Lord's illustration) "can bear no fruit except it abide in the vine;" and again, that any "branch of the vine which does *not* bear fruit, will be cut off, and cast away to wither."

Language of Apostles explained.

§ 4. I will then briefly point out the mode in which I think any christian instructors should set before their hearers the right interpretation of the apostle's language in respect of these doctrines, so as to exhibit the several portions of his teaching not merely as not inconsistent with each other, but as having that intimate connexion which he himself evidently perceived them to have:

First, then, we should point out that though it is very true, men can put in no claim to everlasting life on the ground of even a perfect and unsinning obedience; this truth is not the one which the apostle is occupied in inculcating. The error of the Jews and of those Christians who had been misled by them, was not that of seeking to justify themselves before God by strict *morality*, (though that *would* have been an error,) but by the ceremonial observances of the Levitical

law. This is plain from the notorious *neglect*, among them, of moral duties—the "weightier matters of the law"—with which our Lord reproaches them, when He compares them to men who "make clean the outside of the cup and platter," leaving the inside defiled; and remarks that while they prided themselves on a rigid adherence to minute ceremonial precepts, they were "full of extortion and wickedness." So also does the apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans,[1] (a great portion of those to whom he addresses the epistle being Jews by nation,) speak of the Jews as notoriously "causing the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles," through their violation of the moral law. It is plain, therefore, that when he speaks of these very men "as going about to establish their own righteousness," and seeking to be "justified by the works of the Law," he is speaking not of moral virtue, but the works of the *ceremonial* Law.

You may observe accordingly, that, in the case he so earnestly dwells on, (especially in the Epistle to the Romans[2],) that of Abraham, who was "justified by faith," which was "imputed to him for righteousness," he is contrasting *faith* not with *moral virtue* (for Abraham's faith, displaying itself, as we know it did, in ready and thorough-going obedience, plainly *was* a moral virtue) but, with *ceremonial* observances. For, the reason of Paul's dwelling so much on this instance, evidently is because Abraham not only was not under the Mosaic Law, but had not, as yet, even received the sign of circumcision:[3] this therefore proved,—what the apostle is contending for—that Abraham's righteousness was independent of ceremonial rites.

This may be still further elucidated, from the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, (ch. iii.) where the apostle speaks of himself as being, "touching the righteousness which is by the Law, *blameless*;" all this being however counted by him as dross, "that he might win Christ, and

[1] Chap. ii. [2] Chap iv. [3] Chap. vi. 10.

be found not having his own righteousness which is by the Law, but the righteousness which is by faith of Christ." Now we cannot suppose him so arrogant as to attribute to himself *moral perfection:* indeed we know that his persecution of the Christians he regarded as a grievous sin; which though God was pleased to pardon "because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief," yet could not leave him *morally blameless;* for then there would have been nothing to *pardon;* nor again would he have spoken of *moral virtue* and *holiness* of life, as dross. It is evident he is speaking of the *ceremonial* part of the Mosaic Law.

And lastly, you may point out, in still further confirmation of this, that his strong declarations against the error of seeking to be "justified by works," are all addressed to those among whom the *Judaizing teachers* (first mentioned as troubling the brethren at Antioch) had been busied, or were likely to be, in putting on the disciples the yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies. He writes on this subject accordingly, chiefly to the Romans, and to the churches in Asia; who were the most exposed to *this* danger. To the Greek Churches he writes chiefly on other points; indeed the only exception I recollect is that portion of the Epistle to the Philippians which I have just cited; and in *that* it is evident he is cautioning them against the Judaizing teachers."[1] Now if the error he was combating had been that of men's seeking to earn salvation by their own *moral virtue*, it is plain the danger of *this* error would have been quite as great among *Gentiles* as Jews. But the error he really *was* opposing, and the danger of which he evidently regarded as confined to the Jews, and to those who listened to them, was that of seeking justification by ceremonial observances. The other *is* indeed an error; but not the one he had in view.

It may be added that the error which the apostle does

[1] Phil. iii. 2. For some valuable remarks on this point, see Archbishop Sumner's *Apostolic Preaching*

mean to oppose in these passages, is one more likely, in all times, to prevail, than the other.[1] You will generally find, for one person who seeks to justify himself by the practice of moral virtue, twenty who rely on external ordinances, and compliance with positive rules: and the term "good works" has come, even among Christians, in various ages and countries, to be emphatically applied in this sense.

An error, very nearly the same, had crept in among us, to a vast extent, before the Reformation. "Good works" had come to signify, principally, if not exclusively, pilgrimages, fasts, genuflections, and ceremonial observances of various kinds; and hence our Reformers used much the same language as the Apostle Paul, with the same meaning, and on a like occasion.

"Both were, indeed, well aware that virtuous actions can never give a man a claim to the christian promises, independently of christian faith; and also that the best actions—in themselves the best—are not acceptable in God's sight (indeed are not even morally virtuous at all) independently of the principle from which they spring. But it is a notorious fact, that it was *not* by virtuous actions—what are usually so called—that the Judaizing Christians, and the later corrupters of Christianity, sought to justify themselves, but by ceremonial observances.

"Such an error as *that* was at least as likely to exist among *Gentiles* quite unconnected with Jews.[2] That Paul's cautions, therefore, against the notion of being 'justified by works,' are addressed *exclusively* to those churches which contained a great mixture of *Jews* and Judaizing teachers, is an additional indication of his real meaning."[3]

In the next place, we should point out to our hearers that "the righteousness of Christ," which the apostle Paul directs his hearers to seek, was a *moral habit*, given by Christ to his followers:—implanted in them by Him through the

[1] See Charge on *Christian Moral Instruction*.

[2] See Essay i. § 11, First Series. [3] Sermons, pp. 401, 402.

operation of his Spirit. It did not consist in their merely standing acquitted, through divine mercy, of the sins committed by them; or in their having imputed to them the righteousness practised by another and not by themselves;[1] but it implied, according to the apostle's representation, their actually *becoming*—not merely being *accounted*—good men; their bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, and putting on, in their own practice, this righteousness of Christ, this "wedding-garment," as He Himself calls it, in the parable of the marriage-feast: a garment *provided* indeed *for* the guests (according to the oriental custom) by the master of the feast, but which *they* were required to *wear*.

I am well aware that I am not speaking in conformity with the established phraseology of those technical systems of divinity, which draw precise distinctions, in reference to the present subject, between "justification," and "sanctification," as defined in those systems. But you should observe that I am not at present occupied either in framing or in expounding,—either in defending, or in censuring,—any technical system whatever; but only in pointing out how we may best explain the language of the apostle Paul; whose writings were not scientific, but popular. I am not finding fault with any technical system, so long as it is not made a substitute for the Scriptures as the basis of men's faith; or allowed to *fetter the meaning* of the sacred writers; or so introduced as to increase rather than diminish the difficulty of clearly understanding them. Many such systems, though differing from each other, and from the Scriptures, in the sense attached to each *term*, may yet perhaps all agree in the *substance* of the doctrines taught. But looking to that which is our present subject of inquiry,—the apostle's use of terms,—it may be established beyond all reasonable doubt, that the word he employs [δικαιοσύνη] which is rendered in some versions "justice," and in others "righteousness," is a

[1] See Essay (Second Series) on *Imputed Righteousness*.

word[1] which must have implied to any one acquainted (as Paul doubtless was) with the usages of the Greek language, a *moral habit;* a habit possessed and exercised by the person to whom it is attributed. A mere *acquittal,*—a verdict of "not guilty," an imputation to any one of good actions not really performed by him,—would have been expressed by another, very different word [δικαίωσις].[2] And this serves to explain his continually supposing this righteousness of Christ which is bestowed on us by Him, through faith, to be something practically exemplified in the life of the Christian; to be an actual "putting on of Christ," in respect of the Christian's own conduct and character: that as the "putting

[1] I have been told that, in some recent publication, a doubt was raised as to the rule here alluded to, respecting the nouns ending in οσυνη, and that εὐφροσύνη was given as an instance against it; but on what grounds, I cannot learn. I have always found it used to signify "cheerfulness," in perfect analogy, consequently, with the other nouns of like termination. There is one passage and only one, (Gal. ii. 21,) in which δικαιοσύνη appears to be used in the sense of δικαίωσις. But in the case of a word of such very frequent occurrence, both in Paul's writings and in the Classics, a single instance ought not —at least in deciding on the *usual* sense of a word—to be set against general practice.

[2] "I wonder the continual use of the word Δικαιοσύνη (righteousness), where the subject of justification is treated of, has not led learned men to suspect the soundness of the mere forensic theory. I apprehend that nothing could be more inapplicable than a Greek noun ending in οσυνη, to a mere business of *reputation*, or *extrinsic change*. All such substantives seem to me, without exception, to express actual and personal habits, rooted in the mind, and manifested in the conduct; at least, the latter is implied invariably. I allow, a vulgar writer, in any language, might overlook such a nicety; but, to say nothing of that divine superintendence, and that knowledge of tongues, which St. Paul had so abundantly from heaven, he was himself too excellent a critic, to have overlooked such a rule in language. Is it, then, credible, that St. Paul should be almost continually applying a word, which he uses oftener than any other single word whatever, and the real force of which he could not but know, in an unnatural and inadmissible sense? Especially when he had in readiness the much more flexible word Δικαίωσις (justification;) and actually uses it, at least in two instances, where the sense obviously required it."—*A. Knox's Remains*, vol. i. *Letter to Mr. Parker, on Justification.* The whole letter will well repay a perusal.

It has been inferred, I understand, from my coinciding, in this point, with Mr. Knox, that I must have derived my views, directly or indirectly from him. I should gladly have availed myself of the suggestions of Mr. Knox, or any other intelligent man; but the fact is, that when I published the second series of Essays, (containing, in substance, the same views,) I was ignorant even of the existence of Mr. Knox, and unacquainted with any of his associates.

But the conclusions in which we have concurred, are what I think any man would draw, who, with competent scholarship, should diligently and candidly examine, with a view to the present question, both the classical and the New Testament writers.

off of the old man" implies the actual discontinuing of a corrupt and depraved life, so, the "putting on of the new man" may, in like manner, imply the adoption of an opposite course of life.

To take one passage out of many to the same purpose that you might set before your hearers: "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward Man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.[1]" This," he adds, "is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, *in order that they who have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works.*"

Many other passages conveying the same doctrine, from several of the sacred writers,—the apostle Paul not least,—we should accustom ourselves from time to time to set forth, and point out the instruction to be drawn from them. For instance, in Rom. viii. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who *walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;* . . . . . they that are in the flesh cannot please God; but ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," &c. This portion of that epistle should be the more sedulously dwelt on, because the unfortunate separation of chapters is likely to lead those who are accustomed to read according to that division into the mistake of supposing that Paul in the description just above (ch. vii.) of the "carnal man, sold under sin," is describing his *own, actual* state; whereas it is plain he is *contrasting* that wretched state, of being "in captivity to the law of sin," with the condition of those

[1] Titus iii. 4—7.

"who through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh."

The last caution I will advert to under the present head, is, that we should warn those who are living a christian life on christian principles, that they have not on that ground any pretence for boasting ("glorying," as our version of the apostle's words expresses it) as if they could merit salvation; but must say, (as our Lord directs us,) when they have done all that is commanded them, "we are unprofitable servants; we have done but that which is was our duty to do." And yet, since they know that "God is not unrighteous, to forget their labour of love," they may fully trust in his being faithful to his promises, and in his "rewarding them that diligently seek Him; not because they have earned his favour, but because He has freely promised it.

And if any one professes to trust in Him for what He has *not* promised,—to seek justification by faith in Him, without loving Him,—or to love Him, without giving that proof of love which He has required, the "keeping of his commandments,"—if any one pretends to be a true branch of the vine, Christ Jesus, yet takes no care to be a *fruitful* branch, we are bound to warn such a person that he is dangerously deceiving himself, and is in instant danger of being "cast forth as a branch and withered."

Erroneous description of Christian Humility.

§ 5. In respect of another point again,—*Christian humility*—much care is requisite in our teaching, to guard against misconceptions of what may be, when rightly understood, very true doctrine;—misconceptions such as may dangerously mislead some of the less considerate of our hearers, and may furnish adversaries with plausible objections against our religion, as leading men into spiritual pride and presumptuous confidence, under the name of humility. I have said that peculiar care is requisite in our inculcation of *this* virtue especially, because it is one in which men are least apt to believe them-

selves deficient; and thus those who are deficient in it, superadd to all their other pride, the pride of supposed humility.

The Christian then should be diligently warned against so perilous a self-deceit. Under this head, men should be cautioned—1st, against the mistake of supposing that they have only to confess their own natural helplessness, and acknowledge that whatever there is that is good in them is the bountiful gift of God; and that so long as they have this before their minds, they are practising christian humility, and are safe from spiritual pride. Now this pious gratitude and reliance on God is indeed a necessary *part* of christian humility; but it is *only* a part, and very far indeed from being the whole. It puts an end to *one* kind of self-sufficiency, by acknowledging that "our sufficiency is of God;" but it is far from being inconsistent with spiritual pride, undue contempt of others, and a disposition rashly to "count ourselves to have apprehended;" instead of "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus," by "working out our salvation with fear and trembling."

A christian instructor should point out accordingly to his hearers, that in our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the Pharisee is described as full of pious gratitude for his own supposed superiority: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. And yet this man, though so distinctly referring everything to the divine power, is represented by our Lord as "*exalting himself.*"

Do we not indeed see every day how prone men are to be proud of *royal* favour?—of having received from their sovereign, out of his kind regard for them, such distinctions as title, rank, power, fortune? How absurd then must it be for any one to suppose that there is no danger of being proud of *divine* favour,—that he is quite

safe from pride, when he is perhaps convinced that he is distinguished as a favourite by the King of kings, and exalted far above the great body of his fellow-Christians, and so peculiarly enlightened by that Spirit of truth as to be exempt from all danger of error, and all need of self-distrust! Self-distrust, indeed, such a person will regard, in his own case, as a *sin;* for he will consider any doubts concerning the perfect rectitude of anything that occurs to his own mind, as no less than distrust of God; after it has been once laid down and assumed as a principle, that all these impressions in his mind are undoubted suggestions of God's Holy Spirit. He may pray perhaps fervently on each occasion, for spiritual guidance: but if he neglect our Lord's admonition, "*Watch* and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,"—he inevitably *will* be led into temptation; by praying without watching, he will be in fact praying that he may *find himself in the right;* and by steadily rejecting every emotion of self-distrust, as the suggestion of the Evil-one prompting him to distrust God, doubtless he will end by being fully convinced that he *is* in the right. Thus effectually does Satan "transform himself into an angel of light,"—by representing not only his own suggestions as coming from heaven, but every better suggestion as coming from himself;—by leading us not merely not to *seek rightly* for true Christian humility, but to *shun* it as a sin.

Not consisting in general confessions.

§ 6. Secondly, Men should be warned not to suppose christian humility to consist in a mere *general* confession of the weakness and sinfulness of human nature, or (which comes to the same) such a sinfulness in themselves—or, if you will, such an utter corruption and total depravity in their own nature,—as they believe to be common to *every* descendant of Adam, including the most eminent apostles, and other saints.

I am not saying, you will observe, that the sinful dis-

position of the natural-man is to be denied, or explained away, or lost sight of; only, that the fullest and most habitual consciousness of *this*, does not constitute the whole, or the chief, and most difficult part of christian humility. A man may indeed feel shame, mortification, self-abasement, alarm,—at being in any respect worse than might have been reasonably *expected of him*;—at having failed in some duty, or fallen into some sin, where others in like circumstances have behaved, or probably would have behaved, better. But who can really feel ashamed,—grieved,—humbled,—or alarmed,—at believing himself no better than the very best of men;—a sinner as vile as the apostles and martyrs, who told us to be "followers of them, even as they were of Christ Jesus?"[1] It is very true that they were by nature sinful men, and had to struggle, as we have, against the original frailty of man's heart, and to subdue it by the help of God's Spirit. All I am saying, is, that we must not allow the Christian to deceive himself into the thought that he really feels shame from a sense of any imperfection, great or small, which is *common* to the *whole human race*; or, that perfect christian humility consists in confessing one's self to be no better than the very best and most eminent Christians.[2]

It is very right that a child should be fully sensible of his not having the understanding and other powers of a man; but you will seldom find a child really mortified and *ashamed* of his being no more than a child, and not possessing manly stature and understanding, if he is but equal or superior to his school-fellows of the same age. It is when he falls short of these, or has committed some fault which they have avoided, or which a child might have been fairly expected to avoid,—it is then, that he is likely to feel real shame; and what is more, a *profitable* shame, such as may incite him to endeavour to do better

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 1. [2] See Note at the end of this Essay.

in future; whereas no one is incited to any exertion for the attainment of anything which he believes to be absolutely unattainable by himself and by his whole species. No man accordingly either *attempts* to add a cubit to his stature, and to still the waves of the sea by his command; or is *ashamed* at *not* having such power;—a power which, as he knows, belongs not to Man. His humiliation at a deficiency, and his exertions to overcome it, are alike limited to deficiencies which are not regarded as *unavoidable*.

I have dwelt at perhaps greater length than was necessary, on a point which appears to me to be of great moment. It is a truth which perhaps it is not very difficult, —but certainly very important—to establish, that a man may be very deficient in personal christian humility, who confesses, however strongly, and reflects on, however earnestly, the universal depravity of human nature; speaking indeed in, apparently, the most disparaging terms, of himself; but in such terms as he holds to be equally applicable to the most eminent of the Apostles and Martyrs.

And to this may be added, that there is not, necessarily, any humility evinced in the strong censures which some are accustomed to pass on the alleged presumption of such as hold the possibility of the Christian's attaining, through divine help, complete and sinless *perfection* in the performance of duty.

If indeed any one maintains that *he* himself *has* attained perfection, he is doubtless guilty of a high degree of presumption. And I do believe that no small danger of something approaching at least to such presumption, is incurred by some, from the view they take of the doctrine of the new birth; and from their understanding the expression of the apostle John (1st Ep. iii. 6.)—"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," as an *insulated* sentence, and without the explanation and qualifications which the very same Epistle furnishes: (as in ch. ii. and ch. v. ver. 16.) The apostle certainly means no less,—and I conceive he

means no more,—than that all sin is a thing at variance with the character of a regenerate man; and that the antinomian doctrines of the Gnostics—whom he is specially writing against—are utterly unchristian.

But the danger I am now adverting to is this: there are some who, apparently at least, maintain that every sin of any alarming magnitude implies the need of being born again;—implies, in short, that the new-birth (since *this* cannot take place more than *once*) has *not* taken place. Now any one who has adopted this view, will be likely, if he is fully persuaded that he himself *has* experienced the new-birth, and has thus been placed in a state of grace, to regard himself as exempt from all danger of falling into sin, at least, any such sin as may endanger his final salvation; since this, according to his view of the doctrine of regeneration, would be an impossibility. Such accordingly seems to have been the conviction which, we are told, supported Oliver Cromwell on his death-bed, who on being strongly assured by his attendants of the indefectibility of divine grace, exclaimed, "Then I am safe; for I am certain that I *was once* in a state of grace." Whatever sins he might have been subsequently permitted to fall into, could not, according to this view, endanger the loss of divine favour. And any one who has such a persuasion will no more think of vigilant precaution against sin, than a man would against one of those diseases that can only occur once, if he has already had it.

If, however, any one only maintains—without pronouncing anything respecting himself,—the possibility of attaining christian perfection, he is not on this account to be at once pronounced guilty of presumption; nor do those who differ from and censure him, necessarily surpass him in humility. He may reply, perhaps to such a censure, by asking, *what* parts of our duty are *impossible* to be performed? how that can be called a *duty*, which is beyond the possibility of fulfilment? on *what days* we should omit, as vain and presumptuous, that prayer in the Te Deum in which we beseech

the Lord to "keep us *this day* without sin?" and whether it be meant either that God has required of us something beyond what He enables us to perform, or that there is some christian virtue which He does *not* require of us?

I am not, it is to be observed, giving any opinion as to the tenet in question, further than to vindicate those who maintain it from being, necessarily, guilty of presumption; and to point out that the opposite opinion does not necessarily imply humility.

On this point I will take the liberty of citing a passage from a former work:—

"It is not, in any case, the belief that exemption from error is, either partially or completely, attainable, that leads to arrogance or presumptuous carelessness; but, the belief of the individual that *he has* attained it, or, that one who shall have attained it, may *know* with certainty that he has done so.

"If a man believes, for instance, that there may be some human actions so performed, under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as to be completely virtuous,—free from all admixture of sin,—in short, perfect,—this belief, whether agreeable or not to the fact, can have no tendency to make him conceited or careless, provided he always maintains that no action, even though it should really be of this description, can be (by Man) *known* with infallible certainty to be such.

"On the other hand, one who entertains the opposite opinion, may yet, conceivably, be deficient in humility and in watchfulness. For he may hold, that every, the best, human action, is, and ever must be, alloyed with some mixture of human infirmities; and yet he may without inconsistency, believe that some part, or even the whole, of his own conduct, is, with all its imperfections, *as near* an approach to perfection as can possibly be expected of such a Being as Man. And whatever he may profess, even with the most sincere intention, he will not really be either mortified or alarmed at the thought of his not having attained a degree of perfection which he holds to be morally impossible.

"Many persons persuade both others and themselves, that they are sufficiently cultivating christian humility,[1] by dwelling much on the weakness and depravity of human nature, on the numerous temptations which beset us, and on the errors and sins which *every man* must be expected to fall into. And if they are reminded that, according to the Scriptures, provision is made by divine grace, for purifying and strengthening our nature, and guarding us against temptation, they will often reply, Yes, but after all, every one does fall into many sins. Now, however true this may be, and to whatever extent, still the consideration of it does not necessarily produce vigilance and humility. The kind of self-abasement thus generated is the same we feel when acknowledging man's inability to 'add a cubit to his stature,' or to 'remove mountains,' or to foretel future events. No one is much ashamed, or put on his guard, by a consciousness of being no better than what, he is persuaded, the wisest and best of his species *must* be.

"However far, in point of fact, sinless perfection may be from being attainable, it is not our deficiency in anything that we regard as *un*attainable, but in what we regard as *attainable*, that tends to make us humble and diligent. The provisions of divine assistance which have been made, do, as we see but too plainly, in many instances fail, more or less, of their object, through man's negligence or perverseness: it may be true that they never do, or will, completely succeed in attaining that object; but still, it is not so far forth as we feel assured they will *fail*, but so far forth as we believe that they *may succeed* in that object, that our zeal and watchfulness are excited.

"The danger of arrogance then is incurred, not by any

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[1] A well-known little book entitled *Hymns for Infant Minds*, I (believe by some of the Taylor family,) contains (Nos. 11 and 12) a better practical description of christian Humility, and its opposite, than I ever met with in so small a compass. Though very intelligible and touching to a mere child, a man of the most mature understanding, if not quite destitute of the virtue in question, may be the wiser and the better for it.

one's opinion, *generally*, on this point, (whether true or false,) but, by his confidence respecting *himself*:—his belief that he either *knows*, or may hereafter in this present life, know, that he *is* perfect. 'If we *say that* we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,' would be not the less true and important, even on the supposition that any one of us actually had completely subdued, by divine help, all sin: for he would not be enabled to know it, nor authorised to *say* it. 'I know nothing (says Paul) by myself; (*i. e.* against myself; οὐδὲν ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα) 'yet am I not hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have [his] praise of God.' If one man is confident that the moon is inhabited, and the other, that it is not, though one of these assertions must be in itself true, both of these men would alike 'deceive themselves,' by pronouncing with certainty, where they could have no certain knowledge."[1]

Nor does the consideration that the human race are *fallen* from a state of innocency which our first parents possessed, make any difference as to the point now before us. A man may indeed feel shame and contrition on account of some deficiency which is *now* unavoidable, but which he *himself* had originally brought on, by his own misconduct. For instance, a poor day-labourer quite incapable of raising himself above that condition, may, if he had once been a man of good property, which he squandered away, be deeply ashamed of his present poverty, and full of remorse for his misconduct; but if he were *born* to poverty through the misconduct of some remote *ancestors*, who had squandered away their estate, it will be at least a very different kind of shame that he will feel; he will feel ashamed, if at all, of his *ancestors* rather than *himself;* and will feel perhaps a discontented

[1] Essays, First Series, pp. 360—2. (Note.)

mortification at his present lot, mingled with bitter indignation at *their* misconduct.

Such, I fear, is but too much like the kind of feeling with which the subtle Tempter of Man leads some Christians to contemplate their present condition as resulting from the fall of our first parents. He would fain persuade us that we ought to feel,—and that we do feel,—penitent for the sin of Adam; and by this false and imaginary penitence, to lose sight of what we really may feel, and really ought to feel, for actual sins of our own.

Evils indeed, or *dangers*, may be felt, or may be apprehended, by us, as the consequence of another man's fault: but no metaphysical subtilties can bring us really to feel,—though they may bring us to fancy we feel,[1]—any of that real remorse and personal self-abasement, for *his* sin, which we should and may feel for an actual transgression of our own.

The true lesson of humility which the history of Adam's fall is designed to teach us, is, self-distrust and watchfulness, combined with a disposition anxiously to look for, and meekly to rely on the promised assistance of the "Spirit which helpeth our infirmities." The history teaches us that even if Adam and Eve had never been, themselves, exposed to such a trial as they did undergo, we, their descendants, resembling them, of course, in character, and where we differ, not differing (naturally) for the better, should, in like circumstances, have yielded, as they did, to the wiles of the same Tempter, whom our unaided powers are insufficient to resist.

It may be worth while here to observe incidentally, that some preachers in describing the condition of Man before the Fall, are accustomed, inadvertently, to use a kind of language likely to convey to the unreflective hearer a notion which I

[1] This kind of self-deceit is treated of in the *Elements of Rhetoric*, p. ii. ch. i. § 2. See also *Cautions for the Times*, No. 27.

presume they cannot intend. I mean that they describe not only the *innocence*, but the purity and holiness, of Man's original character, in such terms as might be understood to imply that *frailty* was *introduced* at the Fall, and did not exist till after the eating of the forbidden fruit. Now it is true that there is no danger of any one's believing, in the strict sense of that word, a contradiction in terms: and that a moment's reflection must make it clear to the capacity of a child, that Adam could not have transgressed if he had not been frail in a certain degree, however less that degree of frailty than ours. But still, such language may produce confusion and perplexity in the minds of learners; and may furnish adversaries with a plausible objection against our religion, as containing a self-contradiction. For that it *is* a self-contradiction to speak of the liability to yield to temptation having been originally produced by yielding to temptation—the cause by the effect,—no man in his senses can doubt. In whatever sense it is that Man was said to be "created in God's image," and that all things that were made were pronounced "very good,"—whatever these expressions do mean, it is plain what they do *not* mean; they cannot mean (as the narrative proves) that our first parents were of such a character as to withstand temptation to disobedience.

Innocent indeed, they undoubtedly were, till they had sinned; for that is the very meaning of the word "innocent;" but it is worth remarking that even innocence was lost before the forbidden fruit had been actually tasted; for since we all know that sin consists, not in the outward bodily act, but in the intention of the *mind*, it is plain they had committed the sin as soon as the purpose of the act was fully formed. This was known even to the heathen moralist by the light of nature:

> "Nam sceleris intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum
> Facti crimen habet."

A man is, morally, a murderer, at the moment he pulls the

trigger of a gun with intent to assassinate; and that, not the less, even should he chance to miss his aim.[1]

Or in any confession not perfectly sincere.

§ 7. Thirdly, men should be warned not to conclude too hastily that they are practising humility by talking much, and in strong terms, (whether to their fellow-mortals, or in their addresses to God) of their own ignorance, weakness, and sinfulness. It sometimes happens that Christians, from—I will not say an *excessive*, but—a *mis-directed*, fear of not sufficiently humbling themselves, are led to use expressions stronger than their genuine feelings, and to confess greater sinfulness than they are sincerely conscious of.[2] But in this they are quite erroneous, even if what they confess should really be, in point of fact, the true state of the case. A man is in a far more hopeful state, who confesses even only half the sinfulness that really belongs to him, and does this in perfect sincerity, and with genuine repentance and desire to amend, (since this man is in a way to obtain, hereafter, a fuller insight into himself,) than one who confesses, with his lips only, the whole of what is really true, but which he does not thoroughly believe. It breeds a habit of insincerity, to say anything, however true in itself, of which we have not a hearty conviction at the moment. And it is a most perilous self-deceit to encourage in ourselves anything of insincere profession; and to measure our penitence and self-humiliation by what we utter, and not by what we sincerely feel.

This is the case in respect of our *private devotions*. As for the practice of speaking much of our sinfulness of disposition, before our fellow-men, it too often proceeds not from true humility, but from pride in disguise. It is one mode in which "Satan transforms himself into an angel of light," by leading us thus to make an indirect boast of our own

[1] See First Charge, Note A, p. 27. See also *Lessons on Moral*, L. 18.

[2] "It is far better to strike the mark, than to shoot beyond it."—ABP. SUMNER, *Apost. Preaching*.

humility, by speaking before others of our own sinfulness, not meaning to be understood that *they* are *less* sinful than ourselves, but that *we* are more *humble*.[1]

Of course, when there is any particular act in which we are conscious of having wronged our neighbour, it is our duty then to confess to him that we have wronged him, and to ask his forgiveness. *This* is a real point of christian humility; and a *great trial* of it it is; far more than the most highflown *general* lamentation over the sinfulness of our nature.

And again, when we are *consulting* some confidential adviser, as to any part of our conduct, we are right (supposing him worthy of being an adviser at all) in opening our hearts to him, and confessing the faults and infirmities which we are consulting him how to shake off and counteract. And in *giving* advice also to a friend, we may have occasion to supply him with a useful warning, by freely confessing to him the snares in which we have been entangled.

But except in these cases, confessions of sin had better be made to God only; and to Him they should be made with perfect sincerity. For though there is no danger of our deceiving Him, there is great danger of our deceiving ourselves.

Or unaccompanied with efforts to amend.

§ 8. Moreover, men should be warned not to be deceived into imagining that there is any genuine christian humility in the strongest *conviction of sin*, without an earnest endeavour to *amend*;—in the most unqualified and earnest confession of unworthiness, which they are content to utter, and to purpose continuing to repeat, day after day, and year after year, without wishing, and seeking, and striving diligently, that each day and year may find them better Christians than the last—more grown, and "growing, in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," and more fit to be a branch

1 "I thank my God for my humili y."—*Richard III.* Act 2. Sc. 1.

of Him, the true Vine, by "glorifying the Father, in bringing forth much fruit."

There is no true humility, without shame, mortification, and displeasure with ourselves, at the thought of our faults and imperfections. This shame and dissatisfaction, if rightly directed, will lead us earnestly to seek amendment and improvement, through the promised help of "God, who worketh in us." Those painful feelings will then be counterbalanced by the cheering consciousness of some actual advancement, and the hope of still further advancement in our christian course: regret and despondency will be more and more exchanged for animated, and cheerful, and hopeful exertion.

But if you suffer yourself (a man should be warned) to be satisfied, even for a short time, with having "disburdened your conscience," (as the phrase is,) by a very full and strongly expressed acknowledgment of your own unworthiness;—if you rest even but a short time on this confession of sins, the thought of your sins will create continually less and less shame and uneasiness, the more you dwell upon it, and familiarize your mind to the idea; till at length you become utterly and incurably callous to those feelings, and to the desire of amendment, which is the proper fruit of them. It is the proverbial effect of familiarity to breed careless indifference. Any one who, on first finding himself unexpectedly living in a situation where he is exposed, either to great danger, (as at the foot of a volcano, or in the vicinity of the plague,) or to disgusting filth, squalid discomfort, and barbarian rudeness of manners;—any one, who, so situated, is at first struck with alarm, horror, or disgust, will either set himself earnestly, to escape from, or to remedy the evils, or if he does not, will gradually, from custom, become so reconciled to them, as to feel no longer anything of the shock he experienced at first.[1] And in like manner the more you accustom yourself (we should urge) to think of any sin, or

[1] See *Butler's Analogy*, part i. chap. v.

of any neglect of duty, without accompanying every such thought with an effort to amend and improve, the less shame, —the less abhorrence of what is wrong, the less regret for your own deficiencies,—you will feel, every day you are thus occupied; and the great enemy of your soul will have been leading you to fancy that you were daily *exercising yourself in humility*, while you were in fact exercising yourself in *getting rid* of all true humility, and in hardening yourself against virtuous shame and profitable self-reproach.

§ 9. It may be added, lastly, that there is not necessarily any real humility in a disparagement of the human *understanding*—the intellectual powers, as contrasted with the affections and other feelings. "The pride of human reason" is a phrase very much in the mouth of some persons, who seem to think they are effectually humbling themselves by feeling (or sometimes by merely professing) an excessive distrust of all exercise of the *intellect*, while they resign themselves freely to the guidance of what they call the *heart;* that is, their prejudices, passions, inclinations, and fancies. But the feelings are as much a *part of man's constitution* as his reason. *Every* part of our nature will equally lead us wrong, if operating uncontrolled. If indeed a man employs his reason, not in ascertaining what God *has* revealed in Scripture, but in conjecturing what might be, or ought to be, the divine dispensations, he is employing his reason wrongly, and will err accordingly. But this is not the *only* source of error. He who, to avoid this, gives up the use of his reason, and believes or disbelieves, adopts or rejects, according to what suits his feelings, taste, will, and fancy, is no less an idolater of *himself* than the other; his feelings, &c. being a part of himself, no less than his reason. We may, if we please, call the one of these a "Rationalist," and the other an "Irrationalist;" but there is as much of the pride of self-idolatry in the one as in the other. The Greeks and Romans were indeed wretched idolaters, in their adoration of the beautiful

statues of Jupiter and Minerva; but the Egyptians, who adored those of an ox and a hawk, were not the less idolaters. The Jews, relying on the decision of learned Rabbis, and the Pythagorean, who yielded implicit reverence to the dictates of the Sage, did not more exalt man into an oracle, in the place of God, than the Mussulmans, who pay a like reverence to idiots and madmen. Each part of our nature should be duly controlled, and kept within its own proper province; and the whole "brought into subjection to Christ," and dedicated to Him. But there is no real christian humility —though there is debasement— in renouncing the exercise of human reason, to follow the dictates of human feeling. The apostle's precept is, "in malice be ye children; but in understanding be ye men."

The error I have been adverting to is worthy of notice, only from the plausibility it derives from the authority of some persons who really do possess cultivated intellectual powers; and who therefore, when they declaim against the pride of human reason, are understood not to be disparaging an advantage of which they are destitute. It may be observed by the way, that the persons who use this kind of language never do, in fact, divest *themselves* of any human advantages they may chance to possess. Whatever learning or argumentative powers any of them possess (and some of them do possess much), I have always found them ready to put forth, in any controversy they may be engaged in, without shewing much tenderness for an opponent who may be less gifted. It is only when learning and argument *make against* them, that they declaim against the pride of intellect; and deprecate an appeal to reason when its decision is unfavourable. So that the *sacrifice* which they appear to make, is one which in reality, they do not *make*, but only *require* (when it suits their purpose) from others. They appear voluntarily divesting themselves of what many would feel a pride in; and thus often conceal from others, as well as from themselves, the spiritual pride with which they not only

venerate their own feelings and prejudices, but even load with anathemas all who presume to dissent from them. It is a prostration, not of man's *self* before God, but of one part of himself before another. This kind of humiliation is like the idolatry of the Israelites in the wilderness, "The people *stripped themselves of their golden ornaments* that were upon them, and cast them into the fire; and there came out this calf."

It may seem almost superfluous to add, that there is no humility, of the right kind, in enrolling oneself in the ranks of some religious party. But one may hear some persons say, "It may be very suitable for such-a-one—some very eminent man—to think for himself, and stand aloof from party; but it would be presumptuous for ordinary Christians to act so." Of this pernicious error I have treated in a subsequent part of this volume.

Such cautions as the above I do most sincerely believe to be needful for every christian instructor; at least for every one who does not confine himself to the delivery of mere moral essays, keeping out of sight the great evangelical truths;—for every one who is not seeking to make the vine-branch bear fruit when it has no communication with the vine.

It is I trust almost superfluous for me to add, in conclusion, that I have been suggesting these cautions not as to persons justly liable to such imputations as I have alluded to, from really holding, and meaning to teach, the erroneous notions described. The contrary is indeed implied in the very advice I have presumed to offer. For it would be not only useless, but absurd, to point out to a man who should be actually a maintainer, for instance, of antinomian (or of any other) tenets, the precautions by which we may guard our hearers against those tenets. Any persons accordingly (if there be any) who do maintain antinomian tenets, though of course they will not approve of what I have been saying, and indeed may be expected to be displeased with it, if the

reasons I have urged shall appear to be weighty, yet must perceive that I have not been addressing myself to them. And of the rest, I trust that I shall at least have given no offence to any reasonable mind, and that my suggestions will be received in the same spirit of candour and charity with which they are offered.

NOTE TO ESSAY I.

NOTE, page 27.

"IT is sometimes considered as a proof of the advantage to be obtained from the habit which I am here presuming to discourage, that such preaching generally proves attractive to the lower classes. This, however, may be accounted for, without furnishing any justification of the practice. For, first, the lower classes, unless they are truly religious, usually *are* gross sinners, and, therefore, are neither surprised nor shocked at being supposed so themselves; and at the same time feel a sort of pleasure which need not be encouraged, when they hear their superiors brought down to the same level: and, secondly, it seems to furnish them with a sort of excuse for their sins, to find that they are so universal and so much to be expected of human nature.

"The considerate minister will not court such dangerous applause: there is no edification communicated by exciting feelings of disgust on one side, and of malignant exultation on the other."—ABP. SUMNER'S *Apostol. Preaching*, p. 136.

ESSAY II.

ON

THE DANGERS

ARISING FROM

NEGLECT OF INSTRUCTION IN CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

ESSAY II.

ON THE DANGERS ARISING FROM NEGLECT OF INSTRUCTION IN CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

General remarks on the existing causes of hostility to the Christian religion.

§ 1. ANY general exhortation to active and steady exertion in our several duties,— whether those of Christians universally, or of Christian-ministers, though listened to, perhaps with interest, and received with approbation, will usually be too vague to lead to a useful application in practice, either by those who are, or by those who are not, already engaged sincerely and heartily in the discharge of their duties. To the one, such an exhortation will generally be superfluous; and to the other, ineffectual.

It is easier, indeed, to give general satisfaction, or at least, to avoid giving offence to any one, if we keep within these vague generalities; because such remarks and precepts will naturally be applied, (if applied at all,) by each hearer, according to his own previously adopted views, and his own habitual practice. To recommend, in general terms, *sound* doctrine and *judicious* conduct, would be, in fact, to recommend to each man *his own;* or at least what he himself thinks *ought* to be recommended: and this would therefore be applied, equally, and in opposite ways, by individuals, differing perhaps the most widely, in doctrine or conduct; and might be, to both equally acceptable, and equally unprofitable.

It was from these considerations that I took occasion, in the preceding Essay, to advert, (without, I trust, giving just

cause of offence to any one,) to certain specific dangers to which our religion may be exposed, through an incautious use of some particular modes of expression;—a danger, both to our hearers, of their being led into such errors as we should ourselves be the first to deprecate; and, also, in respect of adversaries, of their being fortified in their hostility, and furnished with plausible grounds of censure and complaint.

That Christianity has enemies, most persons must be well aware. That these, and persons who are prepared to become such, are more numerous than is generally supposed, and are not unlikely, before long, to show themselves more openly and in greater force than at present, is my own decided opinion; for which, but for the fear of entering on too long a digression, I could offer reasons founded on such evidence as may perhaps not have been brought before some of my readers, and which I cannot think they would regard as insignificant. But whether I am mistaken or not in this opinion, makes no difference in our duty and our responsibility. Should any of us live to see a destructive outbreak of infidelity, we shall yet, — if we shall have taken due precautions against it,—be accounted conquerors, by Him, our Master, who accepts the effort for the deed: and if again we are supine, or indiscreet and incautious, He will—whether the event take place or not, in our time,—He will look, not to the event itself, but to our non-preparation. "If the good-man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched:" — "Be ye therefore ready; for ye know not the hour:"—"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning."

Some persons are accustomed to designate as an alarmist, any one who expresses apprehensions such as these; and to remark, that there is always a cry of "danger to the church," or "danger to Christianity," raised from time to time; by some, from genuine timidity, and by others, with politic design; and that consequently every such alarm is to be

utterly disregarded, as a mere commonplace topic for declaration. Whether any such remarks are fairly applicable in the present instance, each must judge for himself, from the reasons that may come before him. Only, let it not be forgotten, that an evil is not necessarily altogether unreal, because it has often been feared without just cause; and that apprehensions which at one time have proved groundless, may at another time be well founded. The wolf does sometimes enter in and make havoc of the flock, although there have been many false alarms.

About the beginning, for instance, of the French revolution, we well know that a considerable outbreak of infidelity did take place. And further back, about the time of the restoration of Charles II, a reaction resulting from the fanaticism of many extravagant enthusiasts who arose during the preceding civil war, produced effects which continued long after, tending to shake men's belief in revelation. We may see, for instance, in Butler's prefatory advertisement to his Analogy, (and he does not appear to have been of a querulous or of a desponding turn,) that the author seems to consider himself as engaging on the unpopular side among the educated classes, in undertaking a defence of Christianity, and as having the prevailing prejudices of the reading portion of the public in that age, against him.

We must expect that from time to time, storms such as these will arise from various quarters, and will prevail with greater or less force, according to the several conjunctures: and though we are assured that the "gates of death[1] shall not prevail against the Church,"—that is, that the christian religion itself will never be overthrown—it must be remembered that this assurance does not extend to *individual members* of the Church: and that, as far as concerns individuals, the christian faith does lie open to the danger of being over-

[1] "Ἅιδης (not Γέεννα) which is rendered by the ambiguous word "hell," signifies "death"—the "grave."

thrown—*in their minds.* We are responsible for the care with which we inquire into the causes of such a danger, and guard against the effects of them; so that we ourselves at least may as far as possible be "pure from the blood of all men."

Neglect of Popular Instruction in Christian evidences.

§ 2. I have said that various causes operate—and different ones at different periods, to produce a tendency towards infidelity.

On the earlier of the two occasions just alluded to, I am inclined to think that the principal cause which operated, was, the extravagance and the intemperate violence displayed by the religious parties—especially the politico-religious parties—of that period; who had done all that could be done to weaken the foundations of the faith. They had done everything to draw off men's attention from the evidence on which revelation rests, to points of controversy between Christians; and also, by their manner of conducting those controversies, they had contributed to hold up Christianity itself both to contempt and disgust, and at the same time to abhorrence and dread.

If you look into the celebrated work of Hobbes, which excited so strong and general a sensation at the time, you will see the peculiar turn which infidelity then took. Christianity—*i.e.* christian faith maintained on sincere conviction, and not merely professed at the command of the Government for the time being—was evidently regarded by its opponents (in consequence of what they had seen) as an element of discord;—as a principle utterly irreconcilable with the peace and good order of society. They had been taught to consider it as bearing for its motto, "on earth, strife; ill-will towards men." You may observe accordingly that as the religious parties alluded to had been for the most part politically turbulent, and connected with popular encroachments, so Hobbes, and most of that train of anti-christian writers who followed, even down to the time of Hume and

Gibbon, were vehemently opposed to such encroachments,—highly anti-democratical,—and leaning towards the side of absolute monarchy. And hence it is, I suppose, that almost all of them seem to have addressed themselves, solely or chiefly, to the higher classes, and to have regarded the mass of the people as unfitted to have any voice or any opinion on the question; and as bound to acquiesce without inquiry into the religious system prescribed in each country by the rulers, till these should see fit to alter it.

And as the adversaries of Christianity took this course, so its defenders were for the most part content to meet them on their own ground, and to make their appeal also to the higher classes.[1]

Neither the attacks on our religion, nor the evidences in its support, were, to any great extent, brought forward in a popular form, till near the close of the last century. On both sides, the learned (or those who professed to be such) seem to have agreed in this; that the mass of the people were to acquiesce in the decision of their superiors, and neither should, nor could, exercise their own minds on the question; but were to stand by, like an unarmed population of serfs, awaiting the issue of a combat which is to decide who shall be their masters.

You may take as an example the habitual tone of Dr. Johnson's language, as recorded by the concurrent testimony of all his biographers. Ready as he was to defend Christianity by arguments addressed to the more-educated classes, he always strenuously inculcated the implicit acquiescence of the great mass of mankind (including those by no means in a state of mere barbarian ignorance) in whatever they were told by their superiors. Adherence to the christian faith, in the great body of Christians, in a civilized country, he urged,

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[1] Leslie's work, in itself more adapted to popular use than any others of that day, seems yet to have been known solely or chiefly among the more educated classes, till near a century after its publication.

always on exactly the same grounds as would authorize, and indeed morally bind, a Mahometan or Hindoo, steadily to reject Christianity.

When then a new conjuncture arose, and of a contrary character, the defenders of Christianity were, in great measure, taken unprepared. Demagogues arose, who instead of being fanatics, as in the time of our civil war, were infidels. Agreeing in their views of religion with Hobbes and Hume, and Gibbon, they were, politically, in the opposite extreme; and accordingly it was to a different class of hearers they addressed themselves. The People were invited to judge and to speak for themselves, and to assert their claims against the oppressions of priestcraft and aristocracy. The pretended "Age of Reason," and "Rights of Man," went hand in hand.

And then it was found that there had long been a lamentable deficiency (which several writers stepped forward—at the eleventh hour, when the assault was actually made—to remedy)— a deficiency in the providing of popular instruction in the evidences of our Faith: instruction addressed to the great mass of the christian population; who had been, in too many instances, left unfurnished with any means of "giving a reason of their hope."

Effects of the Diffusion of Intellectual Culture.

§ 3. The danger, which, at the period alluded to, produced so sudden and great an alarm, is one which I cannot consider as now at an end. For it is connected with that which is undoubtedly now in progress, and which I am convinced is a dangerous state of things—the diffusion of increased knowledge and intellectual culture among the mass of the people.

Am I then,—it may be asked,—one of those who deprecate and would prevent the diffusion of education and of knowledge, and who regard ignorance as the best safeguard against infidelity?

Now, that we ought not, if we could, to stop the pro-

gress of knowledge, is a position about which some may have doubts, though I have none; but that we cannot, if we would, must be evident to every man of observation and common sense.

To point out, that on the whole, civilization is more favourable to true religion than barbarian ignorance—that it is in the darkness more than in the light, that error is likely to pass for truth, and superstition for genuine Christianity—all this, besides that a full discussion of the subject would exceed my limits, is the less necessary to be here dwelt on, as relating, in fact, to a *speculative* question; since it is not in our power to keep the people permanently in ignorance. We may a little retard, or a little accelerate, the current of advancing knowledge; and we may materially alter its course; but to stop it, is far beyond our power. And it is by directing, not by retarding, the progress of intellectual culture, that we shall best serve the great cause we are engaged in; because the evils which are often attributed to excess in quantity of the knowledge diffused,—to what is called "over-education" of the people—arise, in reality, from *misdirected* education,—from an ill-proportioned growth of the mental powers, and ill-balanced attainments in knowledge.

It should be observed too, that such evils are both the most apt to arise, and also the most extensively noxious, when the minds of a vast mass of grossly-ignorant people are acted on (as in France, at the time of the revolution,) by a small number of intelligent, and educated, but not well-educated men.

When I speak, therefore, of the advancement of knowledge throughout the community, as a dangerous thing, I mean that it is such, in the same sense and in the same manner that bodily growth is dangerous. The growth of the body is agreeable to the order of nature, and is in itself a good; but it calls for discreet vigilance, lest it lead to deformity by becoming irregular.[1]

[1] See Note A. at the end of this Essay, p. 61.

On this subject I have made some remarks (which I will take the liberty of here repeating) in a work published some years ago.

The dangers, I observed, accompanying the progress of society in knowledge and intelligence, "do not arise from the too great amount, or too great diffusion, of mental cultivation, but from *misdirected* and *disproportionate* cultivation. And this misdirection does not consist so much in the imparting of knowledge which had better be withheld from a particular class, or the exercise of faculties which, in them, had better be left dormant, as in the violation of *proportion*— the neglect of preserving a due *balance* between different studies and different mental powers. No illustration will better explain my meaning than that of the bodily growth. A child neglected at the period of growth, will become rickety and deformed, from some of the limbs receiving, perhaps no absolutely undue increase, but a disproportioned increase; while others, do not indeed shrink, nor perhaps cease to grow, but do not increase at the same rate. In such a case, we sometimes say that the head or the trunk is grown too large for the limbs; meaning, however, not absolutely, but relatively; — not that the growth of one part is in itself excessive, but that the other parts have not kept pace with it. And though such a distortion is worse even than a general dwarfish and stunted growth, it is obvious that a full and regular development of all the parts, is far preferable to either; and also, that it is, when Nature is making an effort towards growth, not only more desirable, but more practicable, to make that an equable and well-proportioned growth, than to repress it altogether. We should endeavour rather to strengthen the weak parts, than to weaken the strong. But if we take no pains to do either the one or the other, it is plain that both the corporeal, and also the intellectual and moral, expansion, must lead to disease and deformity.

"As far as relates to Religion, the most important point

of all, both in itself, and as far as relates to the question now more immediately before us, I will avail myself of the words of a recent publication, which express sentiments in which I wholly coincide.[1]

"'A vast and momentous moral crisis is rapidly approaching—the rise of Education throughout the mass of the people. Amidst pretensions to sensible spiritual communion, on the one hand, and a careful avoidance of recognizing any divine interposition, on the other—amidst theories invented or imported, that would subject the sacred volume to the rules of mere ordinary criticism, opposed only in partial and personal controversy—a large portion of the community, which has been hitherto uneducated, is suddenly roused into free inquiry, and furnished with ability to perceive all that darkens and deforms the subject; but—it must be owned and lamented—not furnished with that spiritual training, which alone enables the inquirer to see his way through it.

"'It is not that the people at large are without any religious and moral instruction—it is not that they have *absolutely* less now than heretofore—they have probably more. But the progress of spiritual and worldly knowledge is unequal; and it is this inequality of progress that constitutes the danger. It is a truth which cannot be too strongly insisted on, that if the powers of the intellect be strengthened by the acquisition of science, professional learning, or general literature—in short, secular knowledge, of whatever kind,—without being *proportionately* exercised on spiritual subjects, its susceptibility of the objections which may be urged against Revelation will be increased, without a corresponding increase in the ability to remove them. Conscious of having mastered certain difficulties that attach to subjects which he has studied, one so educated finds it impossible to satisfy himself about difficulties in Revelation;

[1] Bp. Hinds on *Inspiration*.

Revelation not having received from him the same degree of attention; and forgetful of the unequal distribution of his studies, charges the fault on the subject. Doubt, discontent, and contemptuous infidelity, (more frequently secret than avowed,) are no unusual results. It seems, indeed, to have been required of us by the Author of Revelation, that his word should have *a due share* of our intellect, as well as our heart; and that the disproportionate direction of our talents, no less than of our affections, to the things of this world, should disqualify us for faith. What is sufficient sacred knowledge for an uneducated person, becomes inadequate for him when educated; even as he would be crippled and deformed, if the limb which was strong and well-proportioned when he was a child, should have undergone no progressive change as his bodily stature increased, and he grew into manhood. We must not think to satisfy the divine law, by setting apart the same *absolute* amount as the *tithe* of our enlarged understanding, which was due from a narrower and more barren field of intellectual culture.

" 'Nor let it be imagined that this is true only of minds highly gifted, and accomplished in science, elegant literature, or professional pursuits. It is not the *absolute* amount of worldly acquirements, but the proportion that they bear to our religious attainments, be these what they may, that is to be dreaded. If the *balance* of intellectual exercise be not preserved, the almost certain result will be, either an utter indifference to religion; or else, that slow-corroding scepticism, which is fostered by the consciousness, that difficulties corresponding to those that continue to perplex our view of Revelation, have, in our other pursuits, been long surmounted and removed.' "

We have, therefore, to guard against, with equal care, the two opposite errors of two different descriptions of men. The one error is, " that of such as deprecate the increase and spread of intellectual culture, as in itself an evil, though an evil which after all, they can only murmur at, but not ef-

fectually repress; and look back with vain regret on those ages of primitive rudeness and torpid ignorance, which they cannot recall: the other, that of those whose views, though more cheerful, are not more enlightened;—who hail with joy every symptom of any kind of advancement, without at all troubling themselves to secure an equable and well-balanced advancement; or apprehending, or even thinking of, any probable mischief from the want of it. The one party sighs for the restoration of infancy; the other exults in the approach of a distorted maturity."[1]

That danger, then, to the christian Faith,—I mean, faith as existing in the minds of individuals, which began to excite so much alarm about half a century back, is, as I have said, far from being at an end. While some call it the danger of knowledge, and others, the danger of ignorance; they both (as far as they are right) mean the same thing. For if, while men acquire information, and exercise their minds in examining evidence, on other subjects, they remain ignorant and uninquiring in what pertains to the evidences of their religion, the results must be what experience as well as reason might have enabled us to foresee.

Dread of popular evidences.

§ 4. And yet all attempts to supply popular evidence of Christianity,[2] some persons deprecate as absurd, and as hazardous, on the ground that the unlearned cannot comprehend it, and that it would suggest more doubts than it could allay; as if in such an age as this men could be secured from ever hearing the truth of Christianity doubted![3] Such persons, in the endeavour to escape a danger that is unavoidable, incur a double danger on the other side: first, by leaving the mass of the people without

1 *Pol. Economy*, Lect. viii. p. 217.

2 See Note A, at the end of this Essay.

3 If these persons would make the requisite inquiries, they would ascertain, *as I have done*, the existence, among the labouring classes, of Infidel clubs, reckoning their members by hundreds.

evidence for the truth of our Religion; and also, by proclaiming that it *has* no evidence accessible to the unlearned.

For, the danger of infidelity thus arising, will not be confined to the humbler classes of the community, but will extend itself to all, in consequence of one peculiar feature which characterizes the christian religion, and which is one of those that distinguish it from almost all Pagan systems. I mean the circumstance that Christianity professes to be both a religion founded on *evidence*, and a religion calculated for the great *mass of mankind*. It professes to be (not like the paganism of the ancients) *two* systems, one for the learned, and another for the vulgar; but *one* religion, claiming to be understood, and to be received on evidence (though not necessarily the *same* evidence to all) by men of all ranks. Both Jesus Himself and his apostles appeal to prophetic books which were in the hands of their hearers, and to miracles openly performed, as testifying that He came from God. Of his resurrection indeed (as well as of several other miracles) some were eye-witnesses, and others, not. He pronounces a blessing on those who did "not see Him after his resurrection, and yet believed;" which was the case of the converts the apostles made. But all were made converts by evidence accessible to themselves. And there is no hint given throughout the New Testament, that this state of things was hereafter to be reversed, and that men were to be required in future ages to receive or retain Christianity on the same grounds on which the Pagans were taught to adhere to *their* religion. These were taught to reverence it as the religion of their ancestors;—as inculcated by their superiors in wisdom or in rank;—as a part of the constitution of their Country;—and as beneficial to the community, inasmuch as the fear of the gods withheld men from crime, and enforced the fulfilment of their duties.[1]

The christian teachers *overthrew* these religions, by an

[1] See Note B, at the end of this Essay, p. 61.

appeal to evidence; and to evidence accessible to their hearers: whom they exhorted to be "always ready to give a reason of their hope."

If then it should be made to appear that Christianity cannot make good these its pretensions,—that it professes to be, while it is not, a religion addressing itself to the rational conviction of the mass of the people,—this alone, would be sufficient to overthrow the belief of its divine origin. For it will be deemed, and justly deemed, incredible, that the Deity should have erred in his calculations, and should have given a revelation designed for a certain purpose, which purpose it is in itself incapable of answering.

The danger then (it should be observed) to which I am now adverting, is not that of a mere want of adequate evidence, but something distinct from, and beyond this; the danger, namely, of a positive *contrary* presumption arising. It is not merely that men to whom sufficient evidence has not been furnished, will be likely, themselves, to reject what has not been proved to them; but that men of *all* classes—the learned as well as the unlearned—will be likely to regard it as a *positive evidence against* the religion, that it professes to be calculated for mankind in general, and designed to claim their rational belief, while its defenders themselves confess that this object cannot be accomplished.

To set forth, therefore, popular evidences of Christianity is incumbent both on the ministers of the Gospel, and on all who are, or who have the opportunity of being, dispensers of christian instruction; not merely in order to confirm and protect the faith of the great Body of the People, but also, in order to vindicate our own from the charge of inconsistency. And if Christians in the time of the apostle Peter were required by him to be prepared to "give an answer to those who should ask them a reason of the hope that was in them," I know not how a Christian minister in these days can stand acquitted, who neglects to provide both himself and his People with the means of giving such a reason; or, still more, who

discourages and derides all attempts to give effect to the Apostle's admonition.[1]

Opponents of Instruction in evidences.

§ 5. It is not impossible that some of my readers may consider me to have been dwelling unnecessarily on truths, which no one—at least no educated Christian of the present day — can doubt. But they may find most opposite principles set forth in modern publications, professedly christian, and enjoying considerable repute, as being supposed to exhibit the tenets of a party within the Established Church.

They will find it maintained, for instance, that we—the Christians of this age and country—are to be censured for having "shifted the ground of our belief from testimony to argument, and from faith to reason." The reader may observe, that this is almost the very language of Hume's sneers against Christians, whom he represents as giving credence to such "testimony" as does not furnish (which all testimony must, tha. is worth listening to) any valid "argument;" and as resting their "faith" not on evidence, not on "reason," but, on . . . faith; *i. e.* on itself.[2]

Again, we are told that in answering the question why our religion is to be believed, "The poor ignorant uninstructed peasant will probably come nearest to the answer of the Gospel. He will say, 'Because I have been told so by those who are wiser and better than myself. My parents told me so, and the clergyman of the parish told me so; and

[1] A little tract entitled *Lessons on Christian Evidences*, is an attempt to supply the want alluded to. It was drawn up, jointly, by myself and the late Bishop Dickinson; and the Lessons appeared first in successive numbers of the *Saturday Magazine*; and were afterwards published separately by Mr. Parker (West Strand), and also by the Christian Knowledge Society. The tract was subsequently published in French at Lausanne, and in Italian, at Florence; and has been translated into German, Swedish, Polish, Bohemian, Spanish, Roman, Welsh, Turkish, Irish, and Armenian. The last four of these versions have been published by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. It has also been reprinted, with a few unimportant alterations, and widely circulated, by the Irish National-Education Board.

[2] See Note B.

I hear the same whenever I go to church. And I put confidence in these persons, because it is natural that I should trust my superiors. I have never had reason to suspect that they would deceive me. I hear of persons who contradict and abuse them, but they are not such persons as I would wish to follow in any other matter of life, and therefore not in religion. I was born and baptized in the church, and the Bible tells me to stay in the church, and obey its teachers: and till I have equal authority for believing that it is not the Church of Christ, as it is the Church of England, I intend to adhere to it.'

"Now, such reasoning as this will appear to this rational age very paltry and unsatisfactory: and yet the logic is as sound as the spirit is humble. And there is nothing to compare with it either intellectually, or morally, or religiously, in all the elaborate defences and evidences which would be produced from Paley, and Grotius, and Sumner, and Chalmers."

And again, we find the *antiquity* of the christian Church set forth as the only secure foundation of belief: "Till another church has been established, and stood for eighteen hundred years, there can be no argument against Christianity, or against any part of the Church's doctrine, sufficient to counterbalance the argument which we now have in its favour. Testimony, if the right ground of belief, is only to be overthrown by testimony." Something like this seems to have been what was murmured in the Forum of Athens against Paul as "a setter forth of strange gods," in opposition to the prescriptive claims of ancient deities!

When we find writers, evidently of some ingenuity, deliberately declaring that the grounds on which the best educated Christians believe in their religion, are far *inferior* to those which are the very same that the Pagans had for maintaining *their* belief in opposition to Christianity — inferior, that is, to what is manifestly and notoriously good for nothing — we may well feel a doubt (it has more than once crossed my own mind) whether these writers are not, in fact,

concealed infidels indulging in an ironical sneer. Certainly, an infidel could desire nothing better than to find professed Christians deprecating appeals to evidence, and resting their faith on the same ground with that of the Hindoos. As for the Mahometans, if there be any particular charm in the precise number of *eighteen* centuries, *they* cannot, till the years of their Hejira shall amount to that sum, have exactly *that* claim to put forward. But they have the "testimony" of Mahomet as to his night-journey to heaven, uncontradicted by any other witness professing to have been there at the time; and they have the admission of professed Christians, that "testimony can only be overthrown by testimony!"

NOTES TO ESSAY II.

Note A, page 51.

Since the first edition of the foregoing pages were in the press, the following passage caught my eye in the Life of Mr. Wilberforce, being an extract from a letter of his in the year 1825:—

"There is one subject on which I am just now deeply interested, and on which I should be glad to exercise your mind. You are aware that a plan is in progress for instructing our artisans in general in the various branches of philosophy. I was friendly to the design, but I have been endeavouring to obtain an addition to it, without which I fear it will be much more injurious than beneficial to the community, that I mean of having lectures on the evidences of the divine authority of Christianity. I cannot but entertain a strong persuasion, that to instruct any class of men, but especially our artisans of all sorts, in the various branches of philosophy, leaving them altogether ignorant of the grounds on which we rest the divine authority of Christianity, will be but too sure an expedient for training up a race of self-conceited sceptics. Hitherto our religion has been taken on trust; but now there will be a boast that no opinions are to be received implicitly and by prescription. Indeed it is a scriptural injunction, that we should be able to render a reason for our hope. And as it has pleased God to make ours a reasonable service, and to give us a religion which will stand the strictest scrutiny, surely we shall be unpardonable if we suffer our youth to be wholly uninstructed in this particular only."

Note B, page 56.

The passage cited in the Essay (which is from the *British Critic*) is, in the Appendix to the 8th edition of the *Elements of Logic*, exhibited in parallel columns with an extract from Hume's *Essay on Miracles*,—with one from the *Edinburgh Review* of October 1830, p. 211, and with a portion of the New Testament. The last three of these columns are here reprinted. The coincidence between the sentiments of an infidel writer and two professedly Christian, but repre-

senting two most opposite religious schools, and the contrast which all three present to Scripture, is, I think, not only curious but highly instructive:—

"Upon the whole, we may conclude that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."—*Hume's Essay*, (at the end.)

"The sacred writers have none of the timidity of their modern apologists. They never sue for an assent to their doctrines, but authoritatively command the acceptance of them. They denounce unbelief as guilt, and insist on faith as a virtue of the highest order. In their catholic invitations, the intellectual not less than the social distinctions of mankind are unheeded. Every student of their writings is aware of these facts, &c. * * * * They pre-suppose that vigour of understanding may consist with feebleness of reason; and that the power of discriminating between religious truth and error does not depend chiefly on the culture or on the exercise of the mere argumentative faculty. The especial patrimony of the poor and illiterate—the Gospel—has been the stay of countless millions who never framed a syllogism; of the great multitudes who, before and since the birth of Grotius, have lived in the peace and died in the consolations of our Faith, how small is the proportion of those whose convictions have been derived from the study of works like his! Of the numbers who have addicted themselves to such studies, how small is the proportion of those who have brought to the task either learning, or leisure, or industry, sufficient, &c. * * * He who lays the foundation of his faith on such evidences will too commonly end either in yielding a credulous and therefore an infirm assent, or in reposing in a self-sufficient and far more hazardous incredulity."—*Edinb. Review.*

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on Him."

"We know that thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him."

"If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin."

"The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."

"Him God raised up and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen afore of God, even to us." &c.

"To Him bear all the Prophets witness."

"Be always ready to give to every one that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you." &c.

ESSAY III.

ON

THE DANGER

ARISING FROM

PARTY-SPIRIT AMONG CHRISTIANS.

ESSAY III.

ON THE DANGER ARISING FROM PARTY-SPIRIT AMONG CHRISTIANS.

On the danger arising from party-spirit among Christians.

§ 1. THE danger arising from the odium and contempt thrown upon Christianity by the intemperate excesses and fierce contentions of religious parties—especially politico-religious-parties—this also is one from which these times are, unhappily, very far from being exempt.

The nature and origin of party-spirit,—the evils arising from it in religious matters, and the conduct by which we should endeavour to avert or to mitigate those evils,—I discussed at large, in a treatise on the subject published some years ago.[1] To attempt giving even a brief summary of what I have there said, would exceed the limits of the present occasion; and after all, would be, to some, perhaps, superfluous, and to others, unsatisfactory. I will therefore only advert particularly to one point, which, in that treatise, though distinctly noticed, is not, I think, so prominently put forward as it should have been, and dwelt on as furnishing a practical maxim of easy application. It is this: that party-spirit, in that sense in which I have spoken of it as a thing to be wholly renounced, and sedulously shunned in religious matters, consists in a *general*, *indefinite* conformity to the views and practices of some party;—a zeal for the advancement of that party and the promotion of their objects, *generally*, and without *limitation*, either of the time or of the objects themselves.

[1] *Bampton Lectures* for 1822.

There is no party-spirit (in the strict sense of the word) necessarily generated by the forming of a combination with others for *fixed* and *definite* objects, to be pursued by certain *specified* means, and under regulations distinctly laid down, and strictly observed. The objects themselves indeed (even in this last case) may be good or bad—important or trifling;—the persons with whom we unite may be suitable coadjutors, or the reverse;—the combination may be wise or unwise; but still, as long as the union is (like that of a regular treaty) for a *specified* purpose, and under *prescribed rules*, and is not allowed to have any influence beyond these, nor to bind persons *indefinitely*, and without any limitation, in respect of time, or of objects proposed, or of measures to be adopted,—we do not, by entering into any such combination, forfeit our independence, or become, properly speaking, partizans.

Those who are unaccustomed to steady reflection and clearness of distinction are apt to confound together in their minds two questions which ought carefully to be distinguished: that concerning the character of the particular *objects* which, in each particular case, may be proposed; and that concerning the character of the *combination* itself.

If, on the one hand, men combine for a bad purpose,[1] they are censured for the *bad purpose* independently of the *combination*. For they would be culpable if, even acting singly, they were to aim at an unjust object. On the other hand, men uniting themselves to a party with a good design, for the furtherance of some desirable religious objects, but uniting in that *indefinite* manner above described, will incur all the dangers resulting from party-spirit. They will be in danger of being led on, step by step, first to give their countenance to much that they disapprove, and next to approve, and ultimately to take part in, much that their better mind

[1] As for instance (to allude to a case familiar to our minds at present) when men combine to deter by violence any man from working at his lawful trade.—See *Lessons on Money-Matters*, Lesson the last.

would originally have condemned. And too often they will be drawn on at length to sacrifice the very *end* originally proposed, to the *means;* and to abandon the whole spirit and character, and temper of the christian religion, in their zeal for a party, which they had at first joined for the sake of advancing the christian religion.

We are right then, when the objects proposed are in themselves good, and when these, and the means by which they are to be promoted, are distinctly specified—we are right in associating together for such purposes, provided we are careful to guard our minds against the insensible, insidious encroachments of party-spirit;—against being unconsciously led beyond the defined limits;—so as to bind ourselves, (in any thing that concerns religion,) by an indefinite, general allegiance to any man or set of men. The distinction may be illustrated by the case of civil governments. It makes a great difference whether we live under a settled constitution and formally-enacted laws—even though these should be not exempt from imperfection—or whether we live under arbitrary rulers, acting according to their own *unlimited* discretion.

Attempt to defend partizanship.

§ 2. Some persons however, are accustomed to maintain that every one does, and must, belong to some party, unless he dissents, on all subjects, and on all points, from every one else. Either from confusion of thought, or from sophistical design, they confound together partizanship, and mere agreement in opinion: though it is evident that any number of persons may arrive at the same conclusions, not only without any *concert*, but even without being aware of each other's existence.

You may hear it again said, not uncommonly, that "when bad men conspire, good men must unite;"—that party-spirit is productive of some good, as well as some evil,—that it cannot be dispensed with, till human nature shall have been so far improved as to enable us to substitute universally some

better principle;—that it has its uses, though like every thing human, it is liable to abuse;—and that care must be taken to guard against its excess, &c.

Now all this may perhaps be, in secular matters, just, though too vague to be of much practical utility; since no one needs to be informed, that *abuses* and *excesses* are to be avoided: and few are likely to attribute these faults to themselves. Such general remarks therefore men are more likely to apply to an opposite party than to their own. But as far as the remarks are right and true, they are (as I have said) applicable in respect of *secular* matters only, and not of *religious*. In these, I should say that it is not an *abuse* or an *excess* of party-spirit that is to be avoided; but that party-spirit—in the strict sense, as above explained—is *itself an abuse*, and is wholly and universally forbidden by the Apostle, as "carnal."[1]

I do not conceive the case of a Church to be any exception. A Church is, or ought to be, a community of Christians combined for certain *definite* objects, and under *prescribed rules*. If any one consider the *specified* doctrines of some Church, as fundamentally erroneous, or cannot conscientiously comply with its *prescribed* formularies, he ought not to be a member of that Church: but it is not at all implied by his being a member of a certain Church, that he agrees with every member of it, or even with the majority of the members, in the opinions that may, from time to time, prevail among them, as to other points, whether of philosophy, or even of religion.

If any one should maintain that the Church of Rome is a party—the most gigantic of parties—and that our Church is not, he ought not to be regarded as inconsistent. For, the distinction is a sound one. Allegiance to the one, is *definite*; to the other *indefinite*. The decisions of our Church—be they right or wrong—are known and fixed: it does not

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 3.

pledge its members to an etcetera. Not so, the Romish Church. A member of that, is bound to acquiesce in WHATEVER the holy Catholic Church decrees, or may hereafter decree.[1] And even supposing all its doctrines and practices to be, at this moment, quite unexceptionable, no one would be justified in adhering to it, unless he had good grounds for being convinced that it has an unlimited power to add to, or otherwise alter, the terms of salvation. For he could not tell what he might be called on to believe, or to do, to-morrow. And accordingly, any one who, *now* rejects the doctrine of the "immaculate conception," is condemned as heretical; though it is admitted that for many ages, thousands of perfectly orthodox Catholics did reject it.

But a Church formed for definite objects, and laying down *definitely* its doctrines and its rules, is not of the objectionable character of a party. So also, if any one joins (as most of us have) a regularly formed religious Association for the distributing of Bibles and other selected books, and for other such specified purposes, he does not bind himself to a general conformity of sentiments and practice in other points, with each member, or even with the majority of the members; but preserves his original independence.

Dangers of partizanship.

§ 3. But it is otherwise if a man allows himself to be considered as belonging to a party, and as conforming indefinitely to their general views,—their prevailing tone of sentiment,—and their established practice. He may flatter himself indeed that whenever he may see reason to disapprove of any of these, he can withdraw. But the odium he would incur by such a step, is but too likely to make him hesitate at taking it; and in the mean time—while hesitating—he is drawn on by little and little to acquiesce in, and ultimately to counte-

[1] It is a curious fact, that Chillingworth foretold as probable the adoption by the Romish Church of the dogma of the "immaculate conception."

nance, much that he would, originally, and judging for himself, have shrunk from.

Sometimes too you may even find a person distinctly avowing, in *private conversation*, his disapprobation of many of the proceedings of the party with which he is connected, but to which he still chuses to adhere, on the ground that he *can effect more good in conjunction with them*, than alone.

But this very circumstance ought to remind such a person, that by belonging to the party, he becomes more or less *responsible* for *all* their acts—for all the acts indeed (in matters pertaining to religion) of any of the members of that religious party—at least it is impossible for him to say how far he may *not* be responsible—when he does not distinctly and *publicly* protest against those acts. For it is plain that the very same kind of support and countenance which *he* is deriving from *them*, in accomplishing what *he* regards as good objects, *they*, in turn, derive from *him*, in theirs. And his disapprobation accordingly of any part of their conduct to which he thus continues to give such countenance, though without personally joining in it—this disapprobation, so far from diminishing, rather enhances his culpability. Paul, we know, bitterly reproached himself for having "*kept the raiment* of them that stoned Stephen:" but what should we have thought of him, if he had done this, believing at the time, that the deed was a foul murder?

When we find then, in any case, that we can accomplish, by combining with others, some good object which we could not so well effect, alone, (as, for instance, the establishment of an Hospital, or other such charity; or of an Association such as that above alluded to,) we are justified in uniting with them specifically and distinctly *for* that object, and no further; and then, we are responsible for nothing beyond the regular acts of the association so formed. The individuals thus united with us, may differ from us, or from each other, in various points (of religion, or of politics, or of anything else,) distinct from the specified object; and we are not

answerable for their actions or opinions as individuals, nor necessarily imbued with their general sentiments. We have only to guard sedulously against the danger of a gradual, unperceived introduction of party-spirit, creeping into such an association, and causing it to *depart from* its original and proper character, and to *become* a PARTY strictly so called; *i. e.* a combination for the purpose of promoting, *generally*, and *indefinitely*, a certain class of objects.

And as to any such general and indefinite adherence to a religious party, I cannot but think (independently of other considerations) that it is setting up *Man in the place of God.* "Lord, I will follow thee *whithersoever* thou goest," is the expression of precisely that sort of allegiance which is *due to God* and *not* to *Man.* "Be not ye called Master; for One is your Master, even Christ."

Bias of judgment arising from party.

§ 4. "We know how much the judgment of men is likely to be *biassed*, and also how much they are tempted to acquiesce in something *against* their judgment, when earnestly pressed by the majority of those who are acting with them,—whom they look up to,—whose approbation encourages them,—and whose censure they cannot but dread.

"Some doctrine, suppose, is promulgated, or measure proposed, or mode of procedure commenced, which some members of a party do not, in their unbiassed judgment, approve. But any one of them is disposed, first to *wish*, then to *hope*, and lastly to *believe*, that those are in the right whom he would be sorry to think wrong. And again, in any case where his judgment may still be unchanged, he may feel that it is but a *small* concession he is called on to make, and that there are *great* benefits to set against it; and that, after all, he is perhaps called on merely to *acquiesce silently* in what he does not quite approve; and, he is loth to incur censure, as lukewarm in the good cause,—as presumptuous,—as unfriendly towards those who are acting with him. To be 'a breaker up of the

Club' (ἑταιρίας διαλυτῆς) was a reproach, the dread of which, we learn from the great historian of Greece, carried much weight with it in the transactions of the party warfare he is describing. And we may expect the like in all similar cases.

"And when men have once been led to make one concession, they are the more loth to shrink from a second; and a third costs still less.

"I know not but from conjecture how far the process I have been describing was going on in the case now alluded to. Certain it is, that the party went on, step by step, towards such tenets and such measures as one can hardly think were at first contemplated by many of its members.

"And it is very observable that, by little and little, they came to adopt notions and practices completely *at variance* with what they had themselves set out with. Their extreme reverence for the Rubrics and Ordinances of our Church, ended in their introducing innovations totally at variance, both in letter and spirit, with what our Reformers enjoined. Their devoted veneration for episcopal authority was found to be compatible with the most insolent disregard for every individual bishop who did not acquiesce in their proceedings. Their professed veneration for the Articles ended in a system of non-natural interpretation, such as might allow a Mahometan to be a member of the Church. And those who had begun by an almost idolatrous reverence for antiquity, and by inculcating such a rigid adherence to the tenets and practices of the primitive Fathers as placed these practically on a level with the inspired Writers, — these very men have at last discovered that neither those Fathers, nor the Apostles themselves, were in possession of the whole Gospel, but that it is to be sought for in the 'development' of subsequent Ages, and of those yet to come."

I have dwelt on this point[1] because some are accustomed to speak as if we were bound to confine our care to the repressing of heretical doctrines actually taught, and of immorality of life.

[1] See Note B, *Elements of Logic*, p. 61.

This is what has been of late maintained by some persons; who, however, have, in no instance, as far as I know, assigned any *reason* for such a judgment. I do not mean that they have merely failed to give any valid and satisfactory reason, but that they have not even attempted to give *any whatever*. They cannot, therefore, wonder or complain, if it should be inferred, that they *have* none to give.

I, at least, cannot but adhere to my conviction, that we who have solemnly vowed to promote "peace, as far as lieth in us," should be guilty of a dereliction of duty, if we should join in, or if we should sanction, whether actively, or negatively (by remaining passive lookers-on), proceedings which tend to schism.

But even supposing Schism to have no kind of connexion with erroneous doctrines, or tendency to produce them (a supposition greatly at variance with all experience), still if we were to disregard altogether divisions within the Church, as a matter of indifference, and take no care, by repressing and guarding against these, to fulfil our vow of maintaining "peace as far as lieth in us," we should be ill discharging those duties in respect of which Christ's ministers may fairly be regarded as successors of the Apostles.

When Paul rebukes so severely the Corinthians as "carnal," inasmuch as there were divisions among them, "every one saying, I am of Paul, and I, of Apollos, and I, of Cephas, and I, of Christ," it is observable that he is not imputing to them any erroneous doctrines, or again, any motives of secular interest or ambition, but simply their separation into parties. Now suppose that some uninspired pastor of the Corinthian Church had, on some subsequent occasion, observed a recurrence of these divisions, — such as we learn did actually take place there,—ought he to have looked on in silence? or ought he,—as it appears Clement of Rome actually did exhort, by an Epistle, — to have exerted himself, both as a member and a pastor of that Church, to repress this carnal spirit, and to check these divisions?

Surely he might have said with good reason, "If, when some *doctrine* is taught which appears to me fundamentally erroneous, I am bound, though an uninspired and fallible man, to protest against, and endeavour to banish and drive away what is, according to the best of my judgment, 'a strange doctrine, contrary to God's Word,' but which yet *may* conceivably be right, much more must I be bound to repress, what cannot but be wrong, such divisions and party-spirit within the Church, as the Apostle has so plainly denounced as carnal."

But, as I have already said, independently of the immediate and intrinsic evil of divisions, no one can be sure what further consequences may be the ultimate result. Suppose the Apostle had allowed the parties formed in the Corinthian Church to remain unrebuked, and to spread unchecked, can any one consider it as certain, or even as probable, that the Gospel-doctrines learned from Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, would have been retained in their purity? Is it not likely that that would have taken place which we know did occur at various times in several of the Churches?—that the sects of Paulites, and Apollonians, and the rest, would have gradually diverged more and more in doctrine? that, under the title of "developments," *depravations* of the lessons of Paul, and Cephas, and Christ, would have arisen and gone on increasing? and that at length, probably, some of the antinomian views and practices of the Gnostics, which tainted some of the Churches of Asia, would have crept into the Corinthian Church?

But this is, unfortunately, a case in which there is no need to resort to conjectures as to what might have taken place in other Churches. We may learn a lesson but too plain from the experience of what *has* taken place in such instances as the one already alluded to, and to which others might have been added.

On the present occasion I may be permitted to advert to one case, not connected with religion, as being one which

must be familiar to the mind of most. No candid,—I believe I might say even no *un*candid,—person can doubt that several men who were, originally at least, sincerely patriotic and loyal, were drawn in to join, unsuspectingly, that Association which afterwards attained such fearful notoriety,—the United Irishmen. The avowed object of that combination, and, doubtless, the real object of many who became members of it, was to obtain the redress, by legitimate means, of sundry real and heavy grievances under which this country laboured. The goodness of the end proposed was likely to prove seductive; and as for the precise measures to be adopted for accomplishing it, these were not definitely laid down in the outset; nor is it improbable that this very indefiniteness was alleged by some persons as an answer to the objections, or rather as a bar to the raising of any objections, and a plea by which to silence every expression of suspicion. It would be unfair,—some would probably urge,—to condemn by a pre-judgment those who have not as yet taken *any* step, or even resolved *what* steps they shall take. It will be time enough to draw back when anything objectionable shall arise.

But the wiser portion of mankind would regard this very indefiniteness as in itself a strong objection, as a reason for withholding their concurrence, and as a fair ground of suspicion. When an army (they would urge) is to be first raised, and organized, and armed, and disciplined, and officered, and it is left as a matter for after-consideration in what direction they are to march, and what operations they are to undertake, one had need have the most implicit confidence in their leaders not to regard with the greatest alarm such a procedure.[1]

Some, however, there doubtless were, as I have said, who, entertaining originally no evil designs, were seduced by specious appearances and fair professions, and did not enough

[1] See Annotation on Bacon's Essay *Of Customs*.

consider that "when once embarked on the stream of Party, no one can be sure how far he may ultimately be carried." They found themselves, doubtless, most unexpectedly to many of them, engaged in an attempted revolution, and partners of men in actual rebellion.

No doubt many did draw back, though not without difficulty, and danger, and shame, when they perceived whither they were being hurried; though it is also, I think, highly probable that many were prevented by that difficulty and shame from stopping short and turning back, in time; and, having "stepped in so far," persevered in a course which, if it had been originally proposed to them, they would have shrunk from with horror, saying, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

Unwise opposition to a party.

§ 5. Clear, however, as is the lesson which it appears to me History affords in all departments of life as to the dangers likely to result from party-combinations, one may find some persons so far from taking warning from experience, that this very experience, even holds out an inducement to them to plunge into the very danger against which it ought to have put them on their guard. For it is notorious that parties are apt to generate parties; men's dread and abhorrence of the extreme into which some party has been hurried, leading them too often to form an opposite party, that, before long, rushes into an extreme on the opposite side.

There is a maxim current, that "when bad men combine, good men must unite," which, as it is commonly applied, has done, I conceive, great mischief, by favouring in practice the error of copying, ourselves, the very procedure we condemn in others. I know not whether any distinction is made, to which importance is attached, between the words "combine" and "unite:" but undoubtedly, if we find that there is some *definite* measure, in itself good, such as is, *e. g.*, the distribution of Bibles and Prayer-books, and certain

other specified books circulated by our Association for discountenancing Vice, which can be better carried into effect by our joint exertions than by any separate course of action, we are perfectly right in joining, uniting, or combining (be the term used what it may), for that defined and specific purpose. Nor ought we to be afraid or ashamed of following in this the examples of others who may combine in the same way for some different object; perhaps for an object which we may think a bad one. We could not, for instance, pass any censure, except in reference to the object itself, on a Society of Mahometans that should be formed for the distribution of the Koran. We disapprove, indeed, of the book itself, but the example of circulating what they believe to be divine truth is one which all men ought to follow in reference to the books which they respectively hold sacred.

But it is a far different case when the character,—the very system of the combination itself,—is something objectionable;—when men unite *indefinitely* for the carrying out of certain general principles, in such ways as may hereafter be resolved on by the leaders (whether many or few) to whom they have intrusted the conduct of affairs; and who, we may be sure, from all experience of the past, will take upon them to explain and to apply those principles as they think fit, and to devise measures accordingly. It is then that great, and indeed, almost boundless confidence is necessarily reposed in the integrity and wisdom of those leaders. It is then that we usually find the members of such a coalition led on, step by step, into much that they would originally have disapproved. It is then that we justly censure the very plan and system of the association as alarmingly dangerous; and that, consequently, we are bound to abstain from following such an example, and from endeavouring to counteract one evil by introducing another, of an analogous character, on the opposite side. For if, after having seen,—and indeed, in consequence of having seen,—into what pernicious extremes men may be gradually led, through the influence of party,

we adopt a similar course ourselves to that which we blame in others, we are not only responsible for the immediate consequences,—for any contrary extremes that may result from our own procedure,—but we are also preparing the way for a fresh and opposite re-action in the other direction,—for new coalitions of a like indefinite character, successively engendering one another to an unlimited extent.

As for the agreement which exists,—and which I rejoice to recognise,—in respect of some great and valuable truths, among Christians of different denominations, who in many other points are of widely different opinions, the inculcation of these truths among the members of their respective communions needs no formal coalition, and is independent of all studied co-operation. Our own congregations, and those of other religious teachers, whenever they find their respective pastors concurring, *without* previous concert, in setting forth some fundamental christian truth, are likely to be even the more impressed with it from the very circumstance of its being inculcated, not by virtue of a stipulation, and in fulfilment of an engagement entered into with those of other denominations, but as the result of each minister's own unbiassed conviction of its truth and importance.

Each christian Church or Sect will thus be bearing its own distinct, independent testimony in favour of the same doctrine; and thus a virtual co-operation spontaneously takes place, even much more effectual than could be brought about by any formal agreement.

We, for instance, of this Church, coincide with the chief part of the Presbyterians, with the Independents, and with the Roman Catholics, in maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity; but, in instructing our people in that doctrine, we can receive no aid from any priest or minister of another Denomination; nor can these receive any aid from us. And, again, in endeavouring to convert a Socinian to that doctrine, I cannot conceive how these different ministers,—agreed as they are in thinking him erroneous,—could so combine their

efforts as to act together to any good purpose. There is in this case, therefore, no need for establishing, and no opening for employing, what might be called a "Catholic Alliance" for counteracting Socinian errors.

Again, we coincide with numerous sects of Protestant Dissenters, in reckoning Scripture the only infallible standard, and denying the divine authority of traditions. But this also we can, and should, inculcate on our own congregations, by as valid arguments as could be adduced by any Dissenters: and if we ever do deem it advisable to appeal to their testimony as a confirmation of our views, we can do so even the more effectually from their being entirely unconnected with us by any preconcerted plan, and formal league; while, to the Roman Catholics, again, or any others who differ from us as to the authority of Tradition, those our arguments are likely to have the less weight in proportion as jealous and hostile suspicion is aroused by the idea of a coalition formed against them.

On any and every point, in short, wherein Christians of other Denominations spontaneously concur with us, that spontaneous concurrence is the only useful co-operation they can afford us, and makes any formal combination worse than superfluous.

And again, in respect of those other, not unimportant points, wherein irreconcilable differences exist among Christians of different Denominations, though we are bound not to give up our own conscientious judgment to that of other men, or require them to submit to our's, I should rejoice to see an universal agreement among Christians,—I might say, among mankind,—to abstain mutually not only from all harsh condemnation and bitterly reviling language, but from all hostile attacks on the creeds or on the systems of those who dissent from us, and in short, as far as possible, from a controversial tone of speaking and writing concerning them.[1]

[1] Charge of 1816, pp. 6—20.

Evangelical Association.

§ 6. The Association, attempted to be formed, under the title of an "Evangelical Alliance," for the promotion of Christian-union, aimed at more, in some respects, and at less, in others, than what I have here pointed out as desirable and as feasible.

It aimed at *more*, inasmuch as some kind of *active co-operation* was contemplated, which was to take place in some undefined way, to be hereafter determined on by those who took the lead in the movement. And it aimed at *less*, inasmuch as it did *not* contemplate any such mutual forbearance among Christians as I have been recommending; but both excluded certain classes of Christians from the Society, and also reserved, for those who did join it, a perfect freedom to continue their hostile attacks on each other, in respect of all points wherein they might differ. And, indeed, I believe it ranked among its most prominent advocates, persons who were actually members of another Society, formed for the express purpose of overthrowing the Established Church.

As for common objects proposed, no mode of useful co-operation has been (or, we may *now* say, *can* be) pointed out, in which such a society can be employed. The individual members of it, indeed, may exert themselves towards such objects; though, as I have pointed out in these pages, rather *less* effectually than if they had *not* been combined in any such Alliance. But the Society, *as a society*, can take no steps,—at least none that ever occurred to me, or have been suggested by themselves,—for furthering any good object. And, on the other hand, there are many ill consequences which naturally suggest themselves to the mind as likely to ensue; besides others not as yet distinctly anticipated by any one, but which it would be rash to feel secure against, when a combination of so indefinite a character shall have once been organized.[1]

[1] A prize has, I understand, been lately proposed and awarded by the "Evangelical Alliance"—that is, by those leaders, who have taken on themselves the management

One most obvious and immediate ill-effect, is the danger of divisions within any Church, of which *some* of the members do and *others* do not, join such an association. When, indeed, a Society is formed for adopting certain definite measures,—such as the Christian Knowledge Society, or our Association here for discountenancing Vice,—a very moderate degree of christian charity will lead the members of it to suppose that their fellow-churchmen, who do not join it, differ from them only in views of expediency, and prefer some different plan of procedure. But when the bond of union is not any definite measure, but—as in the present case—*subscription to certain articles of faith*, a prejudice is likely to be raised against all who hold aloof from such an Alliance, as if their *faith* were unsound. The inference is likely to be drawn, however unreasonable, and however sincerely some may protest against it, that those who refuse to join, or who are excluded from, an Evangelical Alliance, must be strangers to evangelical religion, and, consequently, excluded from the Gospel-covenant, and unfit to be accounted Christians.

I am aware, indeed, that all intentions have been strenuously denied of refusing to reckon as *Christians* even those who are accounted inadmissible into the *Evangelical* Alliance. But it is very difficult to maintain a distinction where there is, according to the received and intelligible use of language, no difference. By a Christian is understood, not merely any one who believes that such a person as Jesus of Nazareth existed, but one who receives the Gospel—EVANGELIUM—of Jesus Christ. A man may, indeed, hold more or less of error intermixed with Gospel-truth; he may more or less have corrupted, or imperfectly embraced the truth; and may, accordingly, be more or less imperfectly evangelical—imper-

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of all its concerns—for a "Treatise on the Sabbath." Now supposing this treatise to be perfectly in accordance with the sentiments of all the Members, still, they have been taken by surprise; for there was no mention at all of the Sabbath in the Articles of Faith which were originally put forth, and are still put forth, by the "Alliance." No one therefore can tell what step may next be taken by these leaders.

fectly christian: but to whatever extent he is *christian*, to the same extent he must be *evangelical*. To ask whether all Christians are evangelical, seems like asking whether all men are human. A person may, indeed, be more or less deficient in rationality, or in some other attribute of the Human Species; but to say that so far as any Being is to be accounted a man, he must be accounted human, would be reckoned not only a self-evident, but an identical proposition. And, so, also, according to any intelligible definition of Christianity, it must be equally self-evident that, to whatever extent any one has embraced Christianity, his religion is evangelical.

Those, therefore, who draw a distinction, and insist on it as an important one (though, certainly, none such is recognised in Scripture), between *Christianity* and *evangelical religion*, lay themselves open to the suspicion of putting forth, as a Gospel, some devices of their own which are distinct from Christianity, and form no part of what was originally taught as the "good tidings"—or Gospel of Christ himself. And this is a matter which calls for serious consideration; for, "if any man," says the apostle, "or even an angel from heaven, preach *some other* Gospel, let him be accursed." It is deeply to be regretted, that any who bear the Christian name, should either deserve such an imputation, or should, by indiscretion, lay themselves open to it, if undeserved.[1]—

No arrogance implied in keeping aloof from party.

§ 7. I will conclude this slight sketch with one remark, in reference to an answer you will be not unlikely to meet with, if ever you should find occasion to urge such considerations as the foregoing.

Not unfrequently indeed you will find men disavow—and perhaps sincerely—their adherence to a party; or at least the *degree* of control under which they are, sometimes

[1] Appendix to Charge of 1816, pp. 36—39. See also *Cautions for the Times*, No. 28.

half unconsciously, held. For—besides the reluctance felt by many to acknowledge themselves in a state of subjection, —it often happens that one of the requisitions, as it were, of a party, will be, the *disavowal* of party. An individual finds himself strongly urged not only to submit to a certain influence, but also to disclaim that very submission: in order to add to the party the weight of his own supposed *independent* concurrence.

But I am now speaking of the case in which a man frankly acknowledges his connexion with a religious party; and, when exhorted to assert his independence, will sometimes reply, with a self-deceiving semblance of humility, that a great and eminent man, placed high by learning, or talents, or rank, may afford to keep aloof from party; but that in such an humble individual as himself, this would be too presumptuous; it would be setting himself up as a great man.

You might here remark, by the way, that any such eminence in station or ability as might enable a man, according to this account, to stand aloof from party, is far from preserving its possessor from party-spirit, if he have no aversion to that spirit in itself. His consciousness of superiority may make him indeed unwilling to be a *follower*, but not necessarily unambitious to be a *leader*, of a party.

Your best reply, however, will perhaps be, that there *is* indeed something of *greatness*—of *moral* greatness—in rejecting implicit submission to the guidance of fallible men;—in withstanding the allurements, and (I may add) the terrors of party; in refusing to give up free-agency, where we *cannot* give up personal responsibility: but that it is precisely this moral greatness that is *required* of *every* Christian, and which, *therefore*, every Christian is *enabled* to manifest. If it be *a duty*, it must be something that, through divine help, is *possible*. And that it *is* a duty, to *all* Christians, to keep clear of religious parties, no one (you may add) can doubt, who looks carefully and candidly to the general tenor—and, in some places, the very words—of the apostle Paul's admoni-

tions. When, for instance, he censures as "carnal, walking as men," those who said, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," he makes no exception in favour of some humbler class of Christians; he does not say, "you that are great and eminent persons ought not to be carnal, and walk as men, though a lower class of Christians may;" nor does he say that their joining themselves to parties was "carnal" in *some* persons, and not in others; but he forbids parties in the Corinthian Church, generally, and totally. And we may be sure that he enjoined no impossible or unreasonable duty: he required no greatness of mind which his Master was not ready to supply. For what purpose indeed (you may add) is divine grace promised under the Gospel, if Christianity be *not* designed to *elevate* man's character? not indeed by supplying high *intellectual* powers to every Christian, or giving superhuman *knowledge;* but by leading all who are willing to be led, to *moral* elevation of character; —that character which a spurious humility would represent as a thing not to be sought for or thought of but by one in ten thousand: while the great body of Christ's People are to claim forsooth the privilege of being allowed to continue carnal, and to show their humbleness of mind by submitting themselves to Man, instead of to God.

Let not therefore (you may say) an undue craving for human sympathy, or dread of man's disfavour, delude you under the specious disguise of amiable modesty and christian lowliness.

Hard, indeed, will be the task of any one who shall set himself—not to encounter one party with the forces of another, but to oppose the spirit of Religious Party, generally. He will find arrayed against him the corruption of human nature in some of its worst forms;. because Man's virtues are here enlisted in the cause of his vices. For it is the character of party-spirit to absorb public-spirit into itself. The kindliest feelings of the human breast,—benevolence and faithful friendship—it contracts into a narrow circle; th

principles of conduct originally the noblest,—disinterested self-devotion, and courage, and fervently pious zeal,—it perverts to its own purposes; veracity, fidelity, submissive humility, charitable candour, in short, every christian duty,—it confines within its own limits. Nowhere, more than in Religious Party, does "Satan transform himself into an angel of light." If you venture into this, the "strong man's house, to bind him and spoil his goods," you must be prepared for a fierce contest. He who is most emphatically the Adversary of that God, who is "the author of peace and lover of concord," must be expected to raise up among the most violent of the members of all parties, a more bitter hostility against you, than they manifest against each other: and an hostility, I may add, the more vehement in proportion as you may be the more eminent in christian virtue and wisdom, and consequently the more influential as an opponent of religious party: even as the waves rage the most fiercely against the rocks which are the firmest and the most prominent.

But "fear them not, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and though thou dwell among scorpions."[1] "Fear not,"—said the prophet Elisha to his servant, when, at Dothan, he was encompassed with foes—"fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."[2] And the Lord will, now, no less, hearken to our prayer, and enable us to see with the eye of faith his resistless host encamped round about us.

But hard also will be the trial that you will have to impose on any one whom you may be exhorting—in these days especially—to keep clear of party-spirit: and harder still—far more formidable—will be his trial, if it be, not to *keep* clear, but to *become* clear of Party, that you shall have to urge him;—to *withdraw* from a party to which he shall have belonged, without joining any other. It will be like the

[1] Ezekiel vi. [2] Kings vi. 16.

cutting off of the right hand, and plucking out the eye that offends. I would have you, in any such case—instead of seeking to disguise the severity of the trial such a man is called to,—I would have you point out and dwell upon the obloquy and vexatious hostility to which he foresees that he shall be exposed, as an additional proof how unchristian and uncharitable a thing is party-spirit; — how encroaching and usurping are its claims; — how enthralling its control: I would have you dwell on this, as an additional motive for his earnestly and immediately resolving, at all hazards, to escape from it, and to guard against it, and to devote himself whole and undivided to the service of "the jealous God."

In proportion as you may in any instance, through divine help, succeed in repressing or mitigating party-spirit,—the bane of our religion,— the disgrace of Christians,—the favourite theme of reproach and exulting taunt from infidels— so far you will have been doing one of the most important services to our holy cause. And when your endeavours to perform this service shall appear to be (like the admonitions of the prophet Ezekiel) in vain, through another's perversity —in vain as far as *he* is concerned — you must remember that they will not prove in vain for yourself. If you shall have faithfully given warning, though others refuse to hear, you "will have delivered your soul," and "your Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward you openly."

ESSAY IV.

ON

THE DANGER

OF AN

ERRONEOUS IMITATION OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

ESSAY IV.

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Our Lord's mode of teaching.

§ 1. THAT our Lord left us in his life "an example, that we should follow his steps," is more readily acknowledged in words, than attentively reflected on. Nor is it enough that we should be again and again reminded, and earnestly and frequently exhorted, to imitate our great Master: we should also carefully examine, in what points, and in what manner his example is to be a guide to us. For when two persons are placed in different circumstances, one of them, when seeking to take pattern from the other, may attempt this so unwisely, as to depart from the model instead of following it. The one may be acting suitably to the position *he* occupies, and the circumstances *he* is placed in, and the other—the injudicious imitator—may be acting *un*suitably to his own. A private citizen, for instance, who would profit by the example of some wise and good king, must do so by rightly discharging the duties of a *private* citizen; not by assuming the demeanour and the functions of a sovereign. So, also, if a clergyman is leading what is called an *exemplary* life, —*i. e.* one which sets a good example;[1]—a layman, who should so imitate him as to take upon himself the ministerial duties which pertain to the clerical profession, would, by that very act, be departing from his proposed model. And in like

[1] See Essay II. Third Series, § 11, p. 137.

manner, any one who should have received an immediate divine revelation, as a messenger from heaven, would be authorized and bound to discharge that office in a manner which would be absurdly and impiously presumptuous in one not so inspired and so sent.

If accordingly any christian instructors should pretend to imitate our Divine Master, by teaching as with "authority, and not as the Scribes," they would by that very procedure become *un*like Him, since they would be assuming (which He never did) a power not really conferred by Heaven.

Our Lord's assumption of authority created surprise (we are told) among the hearers, as being different from what they had been used to. "They were astonished," it is said, "at his doctrine," *i. e.* at his manner of delivering his precepts,[1] for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

The Scribes (*i. e.* copyists and expounders of the Hebrew Scriptures) were of course accustomed to say, "So and so is written in the Law;" "Such and such is the sense of this or that passage, and such and such conclusions may be drawn from it." The teaching of Jesus, on the contrary, was, "*I* say unto you:" "This or that ye have heard hath been said by them of old time; but *I* say unto you—so and so."

And it is worth remarking, that his tone is *more* authoritative than that of the Prophets. His expression is not (like theirs) "Thus saith the Lord;" but thus *I* say unto you. *They* were men *sent* from God: He was Emanuel—God dwelling with his people.

And hence He claimed and exercised (most justly) the right either to publish or to withhold any portion of divine truth, according as He saw fit; and to impart whatever knowledge concerning the Gospel dispensation He did impart, whenever, and to whomsoever He would. This, evidently, is an exercise of that kind of authority which be-

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[1] This is the usual sense of the word "doctrine" in our version of the Bible; answering to the original Διδαχη, and to the Latin "Doctrina."

longs properly to a divine instructor — and which it is therefore most presumptuous for a human instructor, — even were he a prophet — to assume, unless he can show that he is expressly commissioned to exercise it.

The ground on which our Lord rested his claim to be listened to and obeyed — the foundation of the authority with which He spoke, was, the display of miraculous powers. "The works," said he, "which I do in my father's name, they bear witness of me;" "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin;" and again, "If the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes!"

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to observe, that it is not meant to be recommended that the whole sum of Gospel-truths should be taught at once in a single lesson, or should be imparted without any regard to the age, understanding, previous knowledge, opportunities, and other circumstances of the learner; or to the various degrees of difficulty, and of importance, in different parts of what is to be taught. In the teaching of any science, art, language, or professional business, every judicious instructor pays regard to all these points; giving "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," not expecting either the same rate of progress, or the same ultimate proficiency, in all. The censure implied is, not, of a christian minister who teaches the religion of the Gospel *as well as he can;* but of one who does *not* teach all men as well as he can; who, as if he were not a "steward of GOD'S mysteries, and manifold grace," but *of his own,* introduces the system of the "double doctrine,"—the exoteric and esoteric,—borrowed from the ancient philosophers, and early introduced into the Alexandrian school of divinity: who takes upon him to impart to the select few, initiated into mysteries, certain secret doctrines which he conceals from the great mass of Christians, and

"shuns to set before *them* the whole counsel of God," so as to be "pure from the blood of all men."[1]

Danger of a blind imitation of it.

§ 2. The description then which the Evangelists give of our Lord's remarkable and characteristic "doctrine," (*i.e.* mode of teaching,) should be considered and impressed on the mind, in reference to the three questions to which I have now adverted:—1st, What was the *kind* of authority with which Jesus taught, and which distinguished his discourses from those of the Scribes?—2dly, On what did He *rest his claim* to that authority?—and, 3dly, What are we to *learn* from this account of his teaching—how are we rightly to profit by his example?

As to the first point, his authoritative mode of teaching was, as we have seen, to require belief of his assertions, and submission to His commands, *as* coming from Him, and as *therefore* having a *divine* sanction. The "authority" *He* claimed was something far beyond what is sometimes so called. It was much more than that claim merely to a *careful* and *respectful consideration* which fairly belongs to the deliberate judgments of learned, and able, and good men—a right to such *deference* as places the burden of proof on the opposite side.[2] The latter is that "*authority*, in controversies of faith," claimed for a Church in our 20th Article: evidently not that kind of authority which belongs to an inspired and infallible messenger from God, equal to and independent of Scripture; in which sense it is as distinctly *dis*claimed by our Church, as it was claimed by Jesus Christ.

The *ground*, again, on which He claimed such authority, was, as we have seen, the miraculous power He displayed, and to which He appealed in proof of his coming from the

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[1] For a fuller elucidation of this important subject, the reader is referred to Dr. West's clear and unanswerable Discourse on *Reserve*.

[2] See Essay IV. Third Series, § 4, p. 202.

Father; saying, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not."

It is evident therefore, that if Christ's ministers should attempt (blindly) to imitate Him by assuming an authority that belongs not to uninspired Man, they would be, in fact, as was above remarked, departing from his example. And the People, also, if they were to admit any such groundless pretensions of fallible men, and implicitly to receive what these teach, on their own authority, would be departing the most widely from the example of Christ's disciples. For these disciples received the Gospel, not on the bare word of human teachers, but on the evidence which God was pleased to afford,—the testimony He bore to his inspired messengers, "with demonstration (as Paul expresses it) of the Holy Ghost, and with power." And it is plain that a blind and credulous deference to any assumed or imagined authority of fallible men, must be as opposite to a well-grounded faith in God's inspired and duly-accredited messengers, as the superstitious veneration of the Pagans for their idols is to the right worship of the true God.

And yet, as there is in the religions of Pagans a certain degree of external, deceptive, resemblance to true religion—such as that of counterfeit coin to genuine—so, the usurped or fancied authority of fallible men has an outward and deceitful likeness to the legitimate authority rightfully claimed by the Son of God: and the irrational implicit submission of *their* followers, resembles, at the first glance, the humble faith and obedience of those who followed Christ and his Apostles. In both cases there is a confident and resigned submission of the understanding and the will, to the guidance of a supposed divine authority, even as the worshippers of Baal, and of Jehovah—of Mahomet, and of Christ—may be alike in reverent adoration and devoted trust, though differing in the essential point of truth or falsehood. The stamp and outward form of counterfeit and of genuine coin are alike—even *more* alike than two pieces of gold stamped differ-

ently; though, inwardly, the base metal and the gold differ in the really important and essential point.

And hence, obvious and self-evident as the above remarks are likely to appear, there is no small danger of our Lord's example and that of his disciples being in practice misapprehended. Men are apt to conceive themselves, or others, to be the most closely conforming to these models, when they are, in fact, the most widely departing from them.

By recommending a spurious kind of faith.

§ 3. I shall therefore offer some brief remarks on the cautions which are needed in contemplating and applying to our use these examples.

First, then, we may learn from our Lord's appeal to miraculous proofs as the foundation of his claim to authority, how great is the mistake of those who imagine that christian *faith* consists in an uninquiring acquiescence, without any reason for it; or that at least there is the *more* virtue in a man's faith, the less it is founded on evidence.

It is true that, while the Scribes reasoned with their hearers out of the Jewish Scriptures, this was not our Lord's usual mode of teaching; but it would be absurd to conclude that, because his hearers had not the *same kind* of reasons laid before them as the Scribes gave, therefore they had none at all. The argument on which their assent was claimed was *different* indeed, but it was not less an *argument* than the other; and it was far stronger. Jesus demanded acceptance for what He said, not (usually) as proved from the books of Moses and the Prophets, who had received their message from God; but as delivered by Him who Himself came from God, and who appealed to his works, as bearing witness of Him; who claimed even the divine "power to forgive sins," on the ground that He had the no less divine power to bid the palsied cripple, "take up his bed and walk." On this ground accordingly it was—and surely a very rational ground—that the candid among his hearers acknowledged his

pretensions; and followed Him — no longer as merely a teacher worth listening to, but — as one who had a well-founded claim to authority from Heaven. Having wrought his "beginning of miracles in Cana, and manifested forth his glory, his disciples believed on Him;" "We know," said Nicodemus, "that Thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him."

God's providence did not, indeed, supply the very *same kind* of evidence to all alike. The Beræan Jews for instance, being in possession of the Old Testament-Scriptures, were enabled to "search them and see whether the things they were told were so; and are praised for their candour in so doing. To many of the Pagans again, other, but not less forcible evidence was supplied. A sufficient *amount* of proof seems always to have been afforded to all among whom the Gospel was preached, to produce a rational conviction, both as to the divine origin, and as to the true character, of the christian religion.

The faith which Jesûs and the Apostles commended in their hearers, consisted in a readiness to listen fairly to what was said,—in an ingenuous openness to conviction,—and in an humble acquiescence in what they had good ground for believing to have come from God, however adverse to their prejudices, and wishes, and habits of thought; in a firm trust in what they were rationally convinced God had promised, however strange, and foreign from their expectations and conjectures.

And yet there have been persons in various ages of the Church—and the present is not without them—who represent christian faith as a thing not merely different from this, but even opposite to it. A man's determination to adhere to the religion of his fathers, merely on the ground that it was theirs, and that it has long existed, and that he has been assured by persons superior to him in rank, and in presumed learning, that the authority of the Bible, and the meaning of

it, are such as they tell him; this has been represented as the most perfect christian faith.[1] Such grounds for adhering to a religion have been described as not merely *sufficient* for the most unlearned classes,—not even merely as the *utmost* these are capable of attaining,—but as *absolutely* the best;—as better than the most rational conviction of a cultivated understanding, that has long been sedulously occupied in, "proving all things, and holding fast that which is right."

Now this kind of (falsely called) faith, whose usurped title serves to deceive the unthinking, is precisely what is characterised in Scripture as *want* of faith.[2] For I need hardly remind the reader, that the unbelieving Jews, and pagans of old, were those who rejected the "many infallible proofs" which God set before them, because they had resolved to adhere, at all hazards, to the creed of their fathers, and to take the word of their chief priests or civil magistrates, as decisive, and to stop their ears against all evidence, and drown reason by clamour. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?"—"We know that God spake unto Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is."—"Who knoweth not that the city of Ephesus is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?"—"These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive and observe, being Romans."

But opposite as is the faith which the Apostles inculcated to that which sometimes usurps its name, such is the influence of that name itself, and of that external resemblance between things intrinsically the most unlike, that men not unfrequently persuade both others and themselves that they are following the example of Christ's disciples, when, in fact, they are imitating the very persons who opposed and rejected Him.

It is for Christ's ministers, then, neither to teach as

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[1] See Essay II. § 5.

[2] See Essay III. (Third Series,) § 1.

claiming for themselves individually the authority of inspired messengers from heaven, nor to lead the people to confound blind credulity with humble faith; but to manifest in themselves, and to inculcate on others, that faith which our Master called for, and commended in his followers;—that faith which excludes all timorous distrust of his will and power to maintain the cause of his Gospel in the way He Himself has determined. It is for us, in firm reliance on Him, to instruct and encourage men to find a sufficient authority for their faith and for their practice, and to give a sufficient reason of "the hope that is in them."

Or by referring to human authority as decisive.

§ 4. But moreover, we must not (if we would profit by the examples of Christ and his Apostles) refer the people, as a decisive authority, on the essential and immutable points of christian Faith and duty, to the declarations or decrees of any class or Body of fallible men;—of any who have not sensibly-miraculous proofs of inspiration to appeal to. Whether it be to a Council or to a Church, that reference is made,—whether to ancient or to later christian writers,[1]—whether to a great or to a small number of men, however learned, wise, and good,—in all cases the broad line of distinction between inspired and uninspired, must never be lost sight of; and, in conformity with what our Lord and his Apostles have taught us, we must

[1] "It may perhaps be necessary, for the sake of some readers, to observe in this place that it is not intended to cast any contempt on these writers (the ancient Fathers). The number is very great even of those whose works have come down to us, without reckoning those whose works are lost; they flourished in different ages and in different countries; and being all of them uninspired men, of very different qualifications in point of knowledge and of ability, it would evidently be equally rash to speak of 'the Fathers,' indiscriminately, with contempt, or with veneration.

"As there were many sound, and many unsound, religious teachers in the times of the Apostles, so, it is to be supposed, there have been ever since. But there is this important difference; that while the Apostles flourished, *their* infallible authority decided for us *whose* doctrines were sound, and whose erroneous; *after* their time, though we have every reason to suppose that some truth and some error are still taught, we are left to make out for ourselves from Scripture, by the light of Reason, under the guidance of the ordinary aid of the Holy Spirit, which is the true, and which the untrue doctrine."—*Revelations concerning a Future State*, pp. vii. viii.

neither make, nor admit *claims* to inspiration, unless supported (as theirs were) by miraculous proofs.

It would be a most irreverent departure from the models presented to us in Scripture, as well as in other respects, a rash and unwarrantable procedure, to admit such claims without any other proof than the supposed NEED of perpetual inspiration in the Church, and an imagined promise of a supply of that need. .

I say "an *imagined* promise," because there seems no good ground for inferring from our Lord's promise to be with his People "always, even unto the end of the world," that He must have conferred on them, or on some portion of them, *infallibility* in *judgment*, any more than *impeccability* in moral *conduct*; which is at least not inferior in importance. The Holy Spirit which He promised should be "given to them that ask it," is not more needed, or more promised, with a view to correctness of *belief*, than to holiness of *life*: and yet, with respect to this last, most men admit that, "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:" why should we not be equally ready to admit that "if we say we have no *error*, we deceive ourselves?" If we utter with sincerity the words, "Who can tell how oft he *offendeth?* oh cleanse Thou me from my secret faults," we shall not fail to add, "Who can tell how oft he *mistaketh?*"

And the analogy of the *Jewish Church* confirms the view I have taken. It was clearly of divine institution. And our Lord Himself speaks of the compliance due to the regulations made in it by those who "sat in Moses' seat." Yet these were not endowed with infallibility; and are distinctly charged by Him with having, in some points "made the Word of God of none effect through their tradition."

Every one, doubtless, is led to what is right, both in faith and practice, as far as he is "led by the Spirit of Christ;" but how far he *is* in each instance, under that guidance, he cannot know with certainty till the day of judgment. While continually aiming at perfection, both in belief and practice, the Christian is never authorized to "count

himself to have apprehended." Though he may, in point of fact, be right, he must beware of the arrogance of confidently pronouncing and insisting on his own unerring rectitude, unless he shall have received an immediate revelation, and can produce his credentials as an inspired messenger from God.

As for those who do appeal—in support of a claim to continued, or to renewed, inspiration in their respective Churches, or in the leaders they venerate—to sensibly miraculous proofs, such as gifts of tongues,[1] gifts of healing, &c., these persons, how much soever they may fail in establishing the miraculous *facts*, are at least consistent and intelligible in the conclusions they maintain. The test they appeal to is fair.[2] The God that answereth by fire, let him be God!"

But if our Lord had designed to delegate to others, besides the Apostles, an inspired authority to decide on Gospel truths, *without* bestowing at the same time the miraculous gifts which are "the *signs* of an Apostle," He would necessarily have designated, in express terms, that could not be mistaken, the persons and the places to which Christians must resort for such authoritative decisions. He would have clearly pointed out (as under the former dispensation) "the place which the Lord had chosen, to cause his name to dwell there." He would have plainly declared that either the Bishops of some particular Church — whether Jerusalem, or Rome, or Constantinople,—or that the Christian writers of the first three, or the first four centuries,—or that the unwritten traditions[3] current in a certain specified country,—

[1] It may be necessary here to remark, that by "tongues," I mean certain sounds conveying a sense *understood* by some one: not according to the absurd and impious pretensions that have been of late put forth, mere unintelligible gabble.

[2] It is not meant to be implied that all who appeal to supposed miraculous signs, rest their cause on that appeal *only*. Many members of the Church of Rome, and also of various denominations of Protestants, in various ages, down to the present, have set forth appeals of this kind, but have at the same time appealed also to passages of Scripture. Each kind of appeal must be tried on its own proper grounds. When reference is made to Scripture, the authority of that being admitted, the question is, as to the correctness of the *interpretation*. When alleged miracles are appealed to, the *inference* from them being admitted, the question is, as to the *facts*.

[3] It may not be inopportune here to

or that the majority of votes in a general Council, so and so convened,—were to have this decisive authority: and thus by that *specification* on his part, *their* decisions would have been stamped by the miraculous proofs He Himself had displayed.

It is only by such a distinct designation as this, or else by the bestowing of sensibly miraculous gifts, that He *could* have enabled Christians in all ages to know with certainty where they were to apply for the decisive responses of a living oracles of Gospel-truth. I say "with certainty," because on this point, if on no other, *certainty* was to be confidently expected; the very object supposed being to supersede all uncertainty, and all exercise of private judgment. It would have been a mockery therefore to bid us first decide as well as we can, by our own fallible judgment, on doubtful questions and conflicting claims. Had our Lord's design been to provide such a perpetual living oracle, He would not have failed to point to it by a perfectly plain declaration. Now, as we know that He did *not* make any such declaration, we must conclude that He did not delegate the authority with which He himself taught, to any but those to whom his Spirit bore testimony, "confirming their word by *signs* following." [1]

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remark, that the discussions one sometimes meets with, as to the "credibility of *tradition*," *generally*, are as idle as Hume's respecting the credit due to *testimony*. One might as well inquire, "What degree of regard should be paid to books?" Common sense would dictate, in reply, the question, "*What* book? *whose* testimony? *what* tradition?" When Hume read the accounts that have been given, for instance, of Egypt, he doubtless did not sit down to solve the abstract question, whether it were more probable that "pyramids should be built," or "that travellers should lie;" but examined the *particular* testimony as to the *particular case* before him. And just so should each alleged tradition be examined on its own merits.

[1] Bp. Shuttleworth has pointed out, in a recent work, that the most eminent of the very fathers referred to, did not even themselves assert a claim (though it would not have been admissible if they had) to the authority some have since assigned to them; but are careful to draw the distinction between their own writings and those of the inspired Evangelists and Apostles.

I may here observe, that this author, and some others to whom I have made reference, display a tone of fairness and of Christian courtesy, which fully refutes a sweeping charge brought by some of their opponents, that "their arguments are not answered, but they are opposed simply by railing." That they may have been opposed by railing and by

All who have endeavoured to find some such unerring oracle residing in any man, or Body of men, *un*gifted with "the signs of an apostle," all, in short, who (as some of them express it) have "thrown themselves unreservedly on revelation wherever" (as they fancied) "it was to be found, whether in Scripture or Antiquity;" all these have proceeded in the search, each on some arbitrary rule devised by man, and not warranted by any declaration of our Divine Master. "Feeling strongly" (as they profess) "the inadequacy of their own intellect to guide them to religious truth," they have trusted to their own intellect, or their own imagination, to stamp on whatever they think fit, the character of *Revelation*, the great source of religious truth!

But "when they shall say unto you, Lo! here! or, Lo! there! believe it not;" "if they shall say, Behold! he is in the secret chambers," (of some Conclave or Council of Divines,) "or, Behold! he is in the wilderness," (inspiring some enthusiastic and disorderly pretender to a new light,) "go not after them." Whether they fix on this or on that particular Church as the abode of such inspired authority,—or on the Universal Church[1]—which, again, is to be marked out either as consisting of the *numerical* majority,[2]—or, the majority of those who lived within a certain (arbitrarily fixed) *period*,—or, a majority of the *sound* and orthodox

"false extracts" is very probable: this by itself proves nothing either way: but that they have been opposed "*simply* by railing," is an assertion applying to *all* who have disputed their doctrines; and it is one which if made by any person *unacquainted* with the publications I have referred to, argues most culpable rashness; and something much worse than rashness, in any one who *has* read them.

[1] See Note C, at the end of this Essay.

[2] Some are accustomed to cite a passage from a work of Vincentius Lirinensis, describing the Catholic Faith as what has been held "always, every where, and by all." And certainly if any doctrine were broached which *no* Christians hitherto, of any Age or country, should appear to have received, there would be a moral certainty, that this could not be any part of the christian Faith. And if, again, any doctrine could be proved to have been universally received as a part of the faith, we could not doubt its being such. But there is no one, I suppose, who would *limit* within these bounds the articles of his creed, rejecting everything that had ever been denied by any.

believers,—*i. e.* of those in *agreement* with the persons who so designate them,—all these, in their varying opinions as to the seat of the supposed inspired authority, are alike in this; that they are following no track marked out by Christ or his Apostles, but merely their own unauthorized conjectures. While one sets up a golden image in Bethel, and another in Dan, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" all are, in fact, "going astray after their own inventions," and "worshipping the work of their own hands."

For however vehemently any one may decry "the pride of intellect," and the presumption of exercising private judgment, it is plain that that man is setting up, as the absolute and ultimate standard of divine truth, the opinions held by *himself* or his party,[1] if *these* are to be the decisive test of what is orthodoxy, and orthodoxy again, the test of the genuine Church, and the Church, the authoritative oracle of Gospel-truth. And yet this slightly-circuitous mode of setting up the decrees of fallible Man as the object of religious veneration and faith, will often be found to succeed in deluding the unwary.

This error (as, indeed, is usually the case) is fostered by errors on the opposite side. Some men certainly do indulge such an enthusiastic and excessive passion for mental independence, as blinds them to the just claim others may have to an attentive and respectful hearing: many a one, in his dread of a slavish submission to fallible fellow-mortals, is apt to forget that *he* is fallible—and perhaps *more* fallible—himself. Many a one is misled by an over-estimate of the knowledge or ability of himself or of some favourite leader; or by a love of novelty or singularity: and many are prone to forget, that what is left to private *judgment*, is not therefore left to *caprice* and inclination; but that the *right* of judging implies a *duty*, and imposes a heavy responsibility.[2]

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[1] See Note D, at the end of this Essay.

[2] See Hawkins on the *Duty of Private Judgment*.

They forget that they are called on, not only "to prove all things," but to "hold fast that which is good."

Hence, others, in their dread of these faults, which they regard as the worse and the more prevalent, rush into the contrary extreme, and, (either sincerely, or insincerely,) maintain,—by way of being on the *safe* side,—those exaggerated views of church-authority above alluded to; and decry all employment of private judgment, without considering that every one *must*, whether he will or no, exercise his private judgment, at least *for once*, in determining to *whose* guidance he shall resign himself.[1]

And again, this extreme, in its turn, produces a reaction towards the other. For there is no *safe* side but the side of *truth and justice;* and he who seeks to support the *rightful* claims of a Church by asserting such as are groundless, is taking the most effectual means to defeat, in the end, his own object.

Analogy between the created universe and the gospel revelation.

§ 5. As for the powers and offices which Jesus Christ did commit permanently to his Church and ministers, I do not, of course, design at present to enter on the discussion of a subject so multifarious, and so important;[2] but I will take this occasion briefly to suggest—and merely suggest,—for the reader's own consideration, an analogy, which appears to me both just in itself, and calculated to afford, if dwelt on and followed up in private reflection, an instructive elucidation of most of the questions relative to the subject.

The analogy I allude to, is between God's natural, and his supernatural gifts;—between *i. e.* the Material World on the one hand, and the christian Revelation on the other. There are two volumes, as it were, both by the same divine

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[1] See Note E, at the end of this Essay.

[2] It has been more fully treated of in Essay II. on the *Kingdom of Christ.*

Author, spread out before us for our instruction and benefit, from each of which we may learn something of his dealings, so as to apply what we learn to our own practical advantage. One of these may be called the book of Nature—the system of the created Universe; the other, the record of Inspiration; and there is, as I have said, a correspondence in many points between the two.

For as Man is capable of becoming, by attentive observation, acquainted with many of the substances that exist in Nature, and of learning more or less of their properties, and the laws (so called) to which they are subject, and is enabled thence to apply these to his own uses, but is quite incapable of either *creating* any substance, or *changing* the laws of Nature,—so it is also in respect of Revelation. Man,—*i. e.* uninspired Man, by attentive study of the Scriptures, may learn much of God's dealings with our Race, and of his gracious offers and promises; and may so apply this knowledge, and avail himself of those offers, as to become "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" but he can no more *make* or alter a revelation, than he can set aside the physical laws of the Universe; nor must he therefore "teach us with authority," or pronounce, independently of an appeal to Scripture, what is the meaning of Scripture, and what are the designs of the Most High, and the Faith and the duties of Christians.

"Man," says the illustrious Bacon,[1] "having the office of attending on Nature, and studying to ascertain her meaning, ('Naturæ minister et interpres,') is limited in his knowledge and his power, by the observations he has made of the course of Nature:" for "Nature," he adds, "can be controlled only by submitting to her laws."[2] And again, "In all our performances we can do nothing more than apply or remove bodies already existing: the rest nature accomplishes within."[3]

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[1] *Nov. Org.* [2] "Naturæ non imperatur nisi parendo."

[3] "Ad opera nihil aliud potest Homo, quam ut corpora naturalia admoveat et amoveat: reliqua Natura intus transigit."

In these, and many similar passages, the words of this great man, with a very slight alteration, are applicable, with equal truth, to our *Religion;* and his maxims so applied, are not less valuable, or less needed, than in the analogous case of Philosophy.[1]

It is the office of a Church—of all its members in some degree, and of its ministers more especially—to be students (and helpers of other students) of God's revealed will, as recorded in the inspired writings;—in that *second volume*, as it were, of the divine laws and instructions:—always appealing to those Scriptures, even as a sound natural philosopher does to observations of the existing course of nature; not, like many of Bacon's predecessors, to the arbitrary assumptions—the *ipse dixit*—of any human master. And again, we must do this without pretending (any more than a sound philosopher does in *his* department) to an infallible rectitude in our judgment even of the meaning of all that is placed before us; but humbly trusting that in proportion to the candour and diligence with which we employ, on that study, the faculties and means God has given, we shall be enabled to reap the harvest of sound knowledge.

It is for us again to impart the Gospel of the Redeemer to our children and to the Heathen, "preaching not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord:" even as the sound philosopher gives instruction in what he has learned of the constitution and course of Nature, to those who are ignorant, and puts them in the way to verify for themselves the facts and principles taught.

And lastly, as in the natural world, Man has practically availed himself of his knowledge, by exposing wheels to the

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[1] Bacon himself seems to have had in his mind the applicability,—though the nature of his design did not allow him to follow out the application—of his principles to theology. This is in some degree indicated by the very illustration he employs in calling deceptive resemblances of Truth, "Idols." See also Aph. 68, *Nov. Org.*

It may be worth while here to remark, that while all the "Idola" of Bacon find a place in theology as well as Philosophy, those *most* prevalent are the "Idola Theatri." Aph. 44, *Nov. Org.*

stream, and sails to the wind,—by constructing various machines and instruments, for applying to his own use the expansive powers of steam, and the force of gravitation,—but without ever dreaming of changing the properties of air and water and fire, or of destroying gravitation, and the other laws of Nature, or of constructing engines in defiance of those laws,—so, it is the part of a sound Church, to endeavour, by Liturgies,—Catechisms,—Rituals for the celebration of christian ordinances,[1]—and by other edifying means of divine grace, to apply to her members, and to help them to avail themselves of, the benefits,—the offers,—the promises, which God and not Man, has provided for his People in the Gospel; but not to presume to add to, or to alter, by any authority of her own, the terms of Salvation prescribed by Christ and his inspired Apostles.[2]

Those again who fall into the opposite extreme of rejecting or slighting Church-formularies and Institutions,—of undervaluing regularity of appointment of Ministers,—ecclesiastical discipline,—and in short all human Ordinances relating to religion, and all human means of instruction in it,—these are analogous to persons who should resolve, on the ground that Man cannot create the Elements, and control the laws of Nature,—to reject all machinery, all instruments, and buildings and arts, contrived by Man, and to live, like the rudest savages, or like the lower animals, on the spontaneous products of nature; and who should leave their children, un-

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[1] See Essay IV. (Third Series,) § 7, p. 223.

[2] See Essays (Third Series,) on *Romish Errors*, Essay IV. § 5, p. 206; and § 7, p. 224. Much confusion of thought and misapprehension have arisen from not duly attending to the distinction between "terms of Communion," and "terms of Salvation." It is one thing to lay down certain articles of faith, an agreement in which is required of all who are to be reckoned as members of a certain *particular Church*; and quite another thing to denounce as excluded from the *Gospel Covenant* all who do not assent to certain articles.

That such and such articles are essential parts of *christian faith*, we may *think* and *believe*; without claiming any right to pronounce an infallible judgment thereon. But that they are essential articles of *the creed of a particular Church*, we may *know* with certainty; because that Church has a right to declare and *make* them such.

biassed and unprejudiced, — *i. e.* wholly uninstructed, — to make out for themselves whatever Sciences or Arts they could, by their own natural powers, from their own unassisted contemplations of Nature.

The analogy I have thus briefly touched on, between the pursuit of physical and of religious truth, is one which the reader may find it easy and interesting and instructive to dwell on and fully develop in private reflection; and which may be followed out through several different branches. He will find (*e. g.* in what relates to *belief*) a correspondence between the state of philosophy—or rather what passed for philosophy—in former times, — when the "anticipation of Nature" (as Bacon expresses it) was put in the place of the "*interpretation* of Nature;" when the arbitrary conjectural hypotheses of some revered master were laid down, as eternal, immutable, necessary principles, and the phænomena of nature either disregarded, or strained into an agreement with these,—he will find a correspondence between this and the most corrupt condition of theology; when the decisions of uninspired men, or Bodies of men, were made to occupy the rightful place of the inspired Scripture. And again,—in respect of practice,—he will find the pretensions of Magic and Alchymy — the arts by which Nature's laws were to be *controlled*, not followed, and substances transmuted,—he will find these answering to assumptions no less arrogant and groundless, of an authority in religious matters, such as goes to rival and ultimately supersede that of the Lord and his Apostles, and to "make the Word of God of none effect."

For many ages it was taken for granted that the motions of the heavenly bodies must be regulated by totally different laws from terrestrial; and that consequently no mechanical knowledge drawn from the observation of these last, could be suitably applied in astronomy. It was afterwards ascertained that the same physical laws pervade the whole universe, as far as we have been able to extend our observation; though many of the heavenly bodies are beyond the

reach of the naked eye; and an indefinite amount besides may lie beyond the reach of the telescope. The error of those ancient astronomers is somewhat analogous to that of the many persons who scarcely seem to think of employing their ordinary good sense in the application of the truths of revealed religion; as if there were something presumptuous in proceeding according to reason, in reference to things which reason could not have *discovered.* There are not a few accordingly who embrace, or at least act on, such principles in respect of religious matters, as they would consider most absurd in common life. Against this error our Lord seems to have been guarding us in the numerous and varied *Parables,* in which He sets forth the analogy between the affairs of common life and those pertaining to religion. The *facts* indeed which He revealed are such as unaided Man could not have known; any more than the satellites of the remotest planets could be seen by the unaided eye: but He evidently meant that these facts, when made known, should be applied to ourselves and our own conduct, through the divine blessing on the diligent exertion of our own common sense.

The error again of those who have entered on physical speculations beyond the reach of Man's powers, such as those concerning the real essence of Matter—the possible modes of its creation, &c. this, corresponds to a similar vain and presumptuous speculation (of which one may see but too much) on those unrevealed divine mysteries whereof reason *cannot* and Scripture *will* not give us any distinct ideas.

There is, however, this important difference between the two cases: that in the things pertaining to the material world, it is incomparably easier to detect errors or false pretensions,—especially errors in practice—than in things pertaining to religion. False physical theories are refuted by observations of facts: engines that will not work,—astrological predictions which fail,—and other such mistakes or impostures, bring with them, before long, their own complete exposure. But it is not till the great "day of harvest," that

the spiritual tares sown by "the Enemy," will be finally separated from the wheat;—that the "wood, hay and stubble," which Man may have built upon Christ's foundation, will be finally detected by the fire. And in the mean time, it requires our unceasing vigilance to "take heed that we be not deceived" by specious pretensions.

That our own Church abstains from, and disallows, all such arrogant assumptions as I have been speaking of, it is almost superfluous to remark. Her Articles distinctly declare, not only the possibility, but the actual occurrence, of error, both in Churches, and in what are called general Councils; and consequently, that these are not authorized to lay down as an essential point of Faith anything which cannot be proved[1] from Scripture. And the creeds which our Church retained, whatever respect they claim from being anciently and widely received,—are retained expressly on the ground of their being so proved.

These principles are the more important to be steadily kept in view, because it is conceivable that two persons, members of the same Church, whose Confession of Faith they both hold, may yet differ widely in a most important point, if it happen that the one holds those tenets on the authority of his Church, neglecting and deprecating further inquiry, and the other has diligently and ingenuously searched the Scriptures, "to see whether those things be so:" if, in short, the one has aimed at orthodoxy, and the other at truth. For though these will coincide, whenever it happens that the *prevailing* opinion (which is what is usually understood by orthodoxy) is the correct one,—still, the one refers to the standard of Man's judgment, the other, to that of God's infallible Word. Though both happening to coincide in particular conclusions, one man may be evincing the disposition

[1] The words "unless it *may be declared* (ostendi potest) that they be taken out of Holy Scripture," might mislead a modern English reader. The sense is—"unless it *can be proved*."

of those who in earlier times rejected Christianity: the other, of those who embraced it.

Christ's authority not connected with secular coercion.

§ 6. Lastly it must never be forgotten by those who would profit by the example Christ and his Apostles have left us, that the authority He claimed was in no way connected with *temporal* power. His resisting the attempts of the people to make Him king — his refusing, when applied to, to act as "judge or divider," in a secular matter—his exhortation to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's"—his not allowing the disciples to protect Him by the sword[1]—and, when accused of "making Himself king," his solemn renunciation of a "kingdom of this world;" —and again, that his Apostles likewise always earnestly inculcated, by precept and example, the christian duty of submission to the rulers—the *un*christian rulers, be it remembered, — of their times and countries—all this must be well known to every one even moderately versed in Scripture.

And yet a large proportion of professed followers of Christ, in various ages, and of various persuasions, including our own, have maintained that it is the right and the duty (it must be *both*, if it be *either*) of kings or other civil governors, in a christian country, to secure the spiritual welfare of the people by enforcing the profession of the true faith. The sovereign is to prohibit, it is said, all open *avowal* (which indeed is the utmost that Man *can* prohibit) of erroneous notions of religion, under the penalty either of death, or exile, or some other positive punishment, or at least of being excluded from the rights of citizenship, like the Gibeonites in Israel, or the Helots in Lacedæmon.[2]

This glaring discrepancy between Christianity as taught by its Founder, and the religion taught by so many of his

[1] See Note F, at the end of this Essay.

[2] See Essay V.

professed followers, raises an objection against the christian religion, stronger perhaps, in practice, than any other.[1]

How then is it attempted to explain away this discrepancy? Sometimes by alleging, that Jesus, in declaring his "kingdom to be not of this world," meant not to *disclaim* anything, but merely to assert his claim to spiritual dominion; as if *that* had anything to do with the charge brought against Him before Pilate! He was charged with designing to set up a kingdom that would interfere with the Roman emperors; and He distinctly *disavowed* what was imputed to Him.

Sometimes it is pretended, that He merely disclaimed a kingdom over which He should reign on earth in *person*, and which should be *immediately* established at that time; but, that He meant His *followers, at a future time*, to claim, *as such*, a monopoly of secular power, wherever they should be sufficiently numerous, and to put down by force all false religion.[2] It would have been detrimental (I have heard it said) to the cause of Christianity in its early infancy,—before the Gospel had been widely preached, and generally received,—to have at once attempted enforcing the profession of it by secular power, and excluding from civil rights all who did not embrace it. This step was meant to be reserved, it seems, till Christians should have acquired sufficient power. What! greater power than twelve legions of angels? which Jesus declared He could summon to his aid whenever He would! If He did really possess this boundless supernatural power, and had thought it consistent with the character of his religion so to employ it, surely He would have armed his disciples with that force which would have insured an unresisted and immediate acknowledgment of Him.

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[1] See Essay I. on the *Kingdom of Christ*.

[2] "To put down false creeds," says Chrysostom, "by external power is not permitted to the Christians; by persuasion, by conviction, and by love alone, may they work towards the salvation of mankind." I cite the words of this Father, as showing that this change in the character of the religion, which goes to make Christ's a kingdom of this world, was not very early or very suddenly introduced and recognised. See *Life of Chrysostom*, translated from Neander, by Rev. J. C. Stapleton, vol. i. p. 50.

But that this *would* have been detrimental, and indeed destructive, to the cause of his religion, I do believe; because compulsion, either at that time, or at any other, would have changed the whole character of Christ's religion, by making that a "kingdom of this world" which He never designed to be such.

As for all those, more or less ingenious, explanations (such as I have slightly alluded to) by which it has been attempted to reconcile the enforcement of a religious profession by the secular power of the civil magistrate, with the declarations of Christ and his Apostles, it is important to observe, that it matters not, in this case, what meaning, distinct from the obvious and simple one, their language *can be brought to bear;* since it is quite manifest in what sense *they* themselves *intended* to be *understood.*[1] When accused or suspected of designing to set up a system of temporal domination, they solemnly renounced it; frankly avowing, indeed, their determination, at all hazards, to convert by persuasion all whom they *could* persuade, but utterly disclaiming all secular *coercion* in behalf of their religion. Now it would be absurd to suppose they meant to be understood as disclaiming this, merely on the part of *themselves individually,* and not, of their *followers;*—as designing that *these* should claim a monopoly

[1] See Essay V. (Third Series) on *Persecution,* § § 4, 5. Professor Powell has ably pointed out the importance of attending to this distinction; which is perpetually overlooked or forgotten in practice, though when distinctly stated it appears almost a truism. "When a commentator of the present day sets about to put a particular interpretation on a passage in an ancient author, he may, upon an examination of the critical sense of the words, and the construction of the sentence, make out a meaning which to *him* is plausible, and in itself consistent. But there is another question entirely distinct from this, too often quite overlooked, but essentially important to a true interpretation: viz. whether it is *probable,* from concurrent circumstances, that this was the sense, in point of fact, *actually intended by the author.* It is one thing to make out such a sense as, to *our* apprehension, *the words may bear,* quite another to infer that this was the sense *really in the mind of the writer.*" It should be added, that a profane writer may have really intended to convey a sense different from that which his expressions (through his injudicious use of language) do and must convey to all except one in ten thousand. Now we can hardly attribute so great a practical error to the sacred writers.

of civil power as soon as they should become, in each country, sufficiently numerous to enforce that claim;—and should abstain from attempting forcibly to suppress other religions, only till they should be strong enough to succeed. This would evidently have been to plead guilty to the charge brought against them: for doubtless the very thing apprehended by the Roman Rulers, was, that this sect, small and weak at its source, would, as it rolled onwards and increased, become a mighty flood of temporal dómination and coercive power.

It is plain, therefore, that the first christian preachers must have *meant* to be understood as disclaiming all such designs; unless, indeed, they were men so destitute, not only of superhuman wisdom, but even of common intelligence, as not to be aware of the obvious sense which their words could not fail to convey. And to suppose that they had a *secret* meaning, different from what they *intended to convey*,—to suppose this, on the ground that their *words* can be brought to bear another sense, is to represent them as crafty and base hypocrites.

Objections against Christianity from losing sight of this.

§ 7. Observe then how strong are the objections to Christianity raised up by those who justify the employment of secular coercion in its behalf. In the first place, a doubt is raised of our Lord's unlimited power. Since He did not arm Himself or his disciples with an overwhelming force—a host of angelic legions—which would have compelled submission, this must have been either from want of the *will*, or from want of the *power*. Either He judged (as He Himself declared) that compulsion was adverse to the spirit of his religion, or else, He must have lacked the power to exercise it; and, consequently, his pretensions to the possession of that power must have been false; so as to justify the taunt of his enemies, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Those who reject the former side of the alternative have never succeeded,

nor are ever likely to succeed, in escaping the other, by any explanation that will be generally satisfactory.

And, then again, if He and his Apostles be represented as defending themselves from the censure of the civil magistrate, by disowning designs which they secretly entertained, and using expressions of deceitful ambiguity, which they meant to be understood in one sense at the time, to serve a present purpose, and in another sense afterwards, when the occasion should serve for Christ's ministers to unsheath again in his cause the sword He had bid them put up—this is to impute to them a deliberate and fraudulent equivocation.

And this objection is the more formidable, inasmuch as it is likely to operate the most forcibly on the most ingenuous and honourable minds; such as are the most disgusted at all double-dealing and dishonest artifice.

In no way can this objection be effectually repelled, but by admitting that Jesus and his Apostles meant precisely what they said, in the plain and simple sense of the words, without any hidden designs, or mental reservations; and that we are utterly departing from their model if we practise or sanction the employment of any kind of force in the cause of our religion, except the force of persuasive argument.

But the correct view of the examples they have set, furnishes—instead of an objection to Christianity—a strong argument for its divine origin; *i. e.* an argument *against* its *human* origin. For since the natural disposition of Man appears to lean so strongly towards the employment of coercion in behalf of one's own faith, as to operate even *in despite of* the precepts and examples of our Master and his Apostles, and leads men to explain away those precepts, and wrest them from their obvious sense—how utterly improbable is it, that men left to themselves—and especially Jews—*not* having before them those precepts, but educated under a far different dispensation, should of themselves have devised the first system of religious tolerance that ever existed in the world!

Paul, the conscientious, unconverted Jew, "verily thought that he ought to do many things" against what he deemed an erroneous faith; such as "dragging men and women, bound," before the Jewish rulers, and aiding to stone them. Paul the Christian, declares, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves." The change in his faith, was not, you observe, greater than in his views as to the mode of maintaining and propagating his faith. And that these views must have proceeded from Heaven, and not from "the natural man," is proved by every instance of intolerance which (in *spite* of Paul's instructions and example) has ever occurred among Christians.

Recapitulation of the points wherein a false imitation of Christ and his Apostles is likely to take place.

§ 8. In this point then, no less than in the others before mentioned, it is most important sedulously to guard against that false and spurious imitation of our great Master and his inspired servants, which is, in reality, the widest possible departure from them.

They displayed, we know, and inculcated, the most courageous zeal in the cause of religious truth: they bid us "contend earnestly for the faith:" and in conformity with them, we, the members of this Church, are engaged at baptism to "fight manfully under the banner of Christ crucified, against sin, the world, and the devil;" and the ministers of the Church are especially pledged "with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous doctrines contrary to God's word."[1]

Now, if any person should imagine that this zeal—this "*contending* for the faith"—this *fighting* against, and "driving out of error"—are to be attempted by the "arm of flesh"—by secular force—by the sword of the civil magistrate—by other means, in short, than the "meekness of instruction," joined to the recommendation of an

[1] See Ordination Service.

exemplary life—they will be, in fact, reversing what Christ teaches, and discarding and opposing a most essential principle of his religion; "not knowing what manner of spirit they are of."

And so also, in the other points above mentioned, a rash and unwise imitator becomes (as I observed at the beginning) not merely *unlike* the example proposed, but *opposite* to it.

To assign to Bodies of fallible men that kind of authority which properly belongs to God and his inspired messengers —this, while bearing some outward resemblance to humble christian piety, is, in reality, of the nature of idolatry.

If we, again, should teach as on our own individual authority, we should be imitating Christ in the same way as a usurping pretender imitates a rightful sovereign: and our hearers, if they should admit such groundless pretensions, would resemble Christ's disciples in the same way that zealous rebels, the devoted adherents of a usurper, resemble loyal subjects.

And lastly, the credulity which neither requires nor admits evidence—which neither asks nor gives "a reason for the Christian's hope," but shuts men's ears *against* reason,—this, while it bears the semblance of the *faith* which Christ inculcated, is, in reality, precisely that *want* of faith with which those were charged who rejected Him.

It is for us, then, both Ministers and People, so to follow, diligently and carefully—the steps of our blessed Master, as truly to profit by his example; "taking heed that we be not deceived" by false Christs, coming in his name; that is, (in relation to us, in these days) by *false imitations* of Christ. Following Him, not only with active exertion, but also with cautious self-examination and self-distrust—"working out our salvation with fear and trembling," but also, with reliance on his support "who worketh in us," we shall have the cheering hope of advancing continually in that knowledge of Him, and resemblance to Him, which will then only

be completed in his faithful servants when finally admitted into his presence. For "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is;" and "when we awake up after his likeness, we shall be satisfied with it."

NOTES TO ESSAY IV.

NOTE C, page 101.

On the Supposed Decisions of the Universal Church.

QUESTIONS concerning the degree of deference due to the "Decisions of the Church," one may sometimes hear discussed, by persons who appear to mean, not, any particular Church (possessing "power," according to our Articles,[1] "to ordain rites and ceremonies," which need not "be in all places one, and utterly alike") but the Catholic or Universal Church, comprising the whole number of believers throughout the world: as if there were some accessible record of such decisions, such as we have of the acts of any Legislative Body; and as if there existed some recognised functionaries, regularly authorized to govern and represent that community, the Church of Christ; and answering to the king—senate—or other constituted authorities, in any secular community.[2] And yet no shadow of proof can be offered that the Church, in the above sense,—the Universal Church,—can possibly give any decision at all;—that it has any constituted authorities as the organs by which such decision could be framed or promulgated; or, in short, that there is, or ever was, any *one community on earth*, recognised, or having any claim to be recognised, as the Universal Church, bearing rule over and comprehending all particular Churches.

"We are wont to speak of the foundation of the Church,—the authority of the Church,—the various characteristics of the Church,—and the like,—as if the Church were, originally at least, One Society in all respects. From the period in which the Gospel was planted beyond the precincts of Judæa, this manifestly ceased to be the case; and as christian societies were formed among people more and more unconnected and dissimilar in character and circumstances, the difficulty of considering the Church as one Society increases. Still, from the habitual and unreflecting use of this phrase, 'the Church,' it is no uncommon case to confound the two notions; and occasionally to speak of the various societies of Christians as *one*, occasionally, as *distinct* Bodies. The mischief which has been grafted on this inadvertency in the use of the term, has already been noticed; and it is no singular instance of the enormous practical results which may be traced to mere ambiguity of expression. The Church is undoubtedly *one*, and so is the Human Race *one*; but not as a *society*. It

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[1] Art. xx. and xxxiv.

[2] See Essay II. on the *Kingdom of Christ*.

was from the first composed of distinct societies; which were called one, because formed on common principles. It is One Society only when considered as to its future existence. The circumstance of its having one common Head, Christ, one Spirit, one Father, are points of unity, which no more make the Church One Society on earth, than the circumstance of all men having the same Creator, and being derived from the same Adam, renders the Human Race One Family. That Scripture often speaks of Christians generally under the term 'the Church,' is true; but if we wish fully to understand the force of the term so applied, we need only to call to mind the frequent analogous use of ordinary historical language when no such doubt occurs. Take, for example, Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It contains an account of the transactions of two opposed parties, each made up of many distinct communities; on the one side were Democracies, on the other Oligarchies. Yet precisely the same use is made by the historian of the terms 'the Democracy,' and 'the Oligarchy,' as we find Scripture adopting with regard to the term 'the Church.' No one is misled by these, so as to suppose the Community of Athens *one* with that of Corcyra, or the Theban with that of the Lacedæmonian. When the heathen writer speaks of 'the Democracy of' or 'in' the various democratical States, we naturally understand him to mean distinct Societies *formed on similar principles*; and so, doubtless, ought we to interpret the sacred writers when they, in like manner, make mention of the Church of, or in, Antioch, Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, &c.

"But there was also an especial reason why the term Church should have been often used by the sacred writers as if it applied to One Society. God's dispensation had hitherto been limited to a single society,—the Jewish People. Until the Gospel was preached, the Church of God *was* One Society. It therefore sometimes occurs with the force of a transfer from the objects of God's *former* dispensation, to those of his *present* dispensation. In like manner, as Christians are called 'the Elect,' their bodies 'the Temple,' and their Mediator 'the High Priest;' so, their condition, as the objects of God's new dispensation, is designated by the term 'the Church of Christ,' and 'the Church.'

"The Church is *one*, then, not as consisting of One Society, but because the various societies or Churches were then modelled, and ought still to be so, on the same principles; and because they enjoy common privileges,—one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism. Accordingly, the Holy Ghost, through his agents the Apostles, has not left any detailed account of the formation of any christian society; but He has very distinctly marked the great principles on which all were to be founded, whatever distinctions may exist amongst them. In short, the foundation of the church by the Apostles was not analogous to the work of Romulus, or Solon; it was not, properly, the foundation

of christian societies which occupied them, but the establishment of the principles on which Christians in all ages might form societies for themselves."[1]

The above account is sufficiently established even by the mere negative circumstance of the absence of all mention in the Sacred Writings of any *one* Society on earth, having a Government and officers of its own, and recognised as the Catholic or universal Church: especially when it is considered that the frequent mention of the particular Churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, &c.—of the seven Churches in Asia,—and of "the care of all the Churches" which Paul had founded, would have rendered unavoidable the notice of the One Church (had there been any such) which bore rule over all the rest, either as its subjects, or as provincial departments of it.

This negative evidence, I say, would alone be fully sufficient, considering that the whole burden of proof lies on the side of those who set up such a claim. He who appeals to the alleged decisions of a certain community, is clearly bound, in the first place, to prove its existence. But if we proceed to historical evidence, we find on examination that there *never was a time* when the supremacy of any one Church was acknowledged by all, or nearly all Christians. And to say that they *ought* to have done so, and that as many as have refused such submission are to be regarded as schismatics and rebels, is evidently to prejudge the question.

The universal Church, then, being *one*, in reference, not to any one Government on earth, but only to our Divine Head, even Christ, ruling Christians, by his Spirit, which spoke to them from time to time through the Apostles while these were living, and speaks still in the words of the christian Scriptures, it follows that each Christian is bound (as far as Church-authority extends) to submit to the ordinances and decisions,—not repugnant to Scripture,[2]—of the particular Church of which he is a member.

If it were possible that all the Christians now in existence—suppose 250 millions—could assemble, either in person, or by deputations of their respective Clergy, in one place, to confer together; and that the votes, whether personal or by proxy, of 230, or 240 millions of these were to be at variance (as in many points they probably would be) with the decisions and practices of our own Church; we should be no more bound to acquiesce in and adopt the decision of that majority, even in matters which we do not regard as essential to the christian Faith, than we should be, to pass a law *for this realm* because it was approved by the majority of the *human race*.

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[1] *Encyclopædia Metropolitana. Age of Apostolical Fathers*, p. 774, an article by Bishop Hinds.

[2] See Art. xxxiv.

NOTE D, page 102.

On Appeals to Scripture as the Standard.

It is important to observe that there is, under an outward and apparent difference, a close substantial resemblance between those who exalt the most highly the claims of Church-tradition, and some of their most vehement opponents. To decry private judgment and the pride of intellect, and appeal to the consent of the orthodox Fathers and the decisions of the Church, at the same time deciding *who* is orthodox, and what is the Church, according to our own judgment, and by the exercise of our own intellect; or, on the other hand, to decry Tradition, and appeal professedly to Scripture as the standard and rule of faith, but in reality making the standard our *own interpretation of Scripture;* these are in fact but two different forms of what may be called "self-idolatry." And there are persons who, unconsciously, fall into this latter error;—who profess to appeal to Scripture, as their rule of faith, and final decider of all controversies, but denounce (as the Gnostics[1] of the earlier ages did) any one whose views differ from their own—though he may be, perhaps, a diligent and learned student of the sacred writings,—as "not *knowing* the Gospel,"—as blind—carnal—unconverted—"not understanding the things that be of God,"[2] &c.

"And where is the difference," it may be asked, "between taking for our rule of faith, the Scriptures, or our own interpretation of them? since the mere *words* of Scripture cannot be any guide unless we attach some *meaning* to them; and what meaning *can* we attach, except that which appears to us the true one?" Thus insidiously does self-estimation, and reverence for one's own party, creep in under the disguise of veneration for God's Word! I would answer, it is true that in taking Scripture for our own *guide,* we *must* be led by what appears—according to the best of our judgment—to be the sense of Scripture: but when making an *appeal* to Scripture in any discussion with *another,* we must refer him to the *words* of Scripture, and to the sense in which *he* can be brought to understand them. It is a very plain case for the application of that much-praised, though little-practised rule, of doing as we would be done by. Would you think it reasonable for another man to insist on your adopting *his* sense of Scripture, when it appeared to you not to be the true one, and denounce you, if you refused, as not knowing the Gospel? You can have no right then to deny him the same freedom of judgment which you claim for yourself.

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[1] So called from their professing exclusively to *know* the Gospel.

[2] See *Sermons*, p. 127.

Will you reply, "He is wrong, and therefore I ought not to adopt his views; but I am right, and therefore he ought to adopt mine?" Suppose this to *be*, in truth, the actual state of the case; are you *infallible*, that you can presume positively to pronounce this; and gifted with such miraculous *proofs* of infallibility as both authorize you to "judge another's servant," and bind him to acquiesce in your judgment?

Since our great Master, who not only knew the sense of Scripture, but also "knew what was in Man," pronounced no more against the Sadducees than, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures," it surely becomes a fallible mortal to say only, "I think ye do err." But we certainly do often hear expressions which seem to imply (being intelligible on no other supposition) that those who use them make their appeal, not, really, to *Scripture as it meets the eye of every* reader, but to their own interpretation of it. For instance, one may hear it said (in a recent publication) that, "in any difficulty, a far more safe and certain guide is provided for us, than all the wit or wisdom of Man could furnish. The promise is, that '*the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein*, and this promise is made doubly sure by the means provided for its accomplishment. '*Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*' Here, then, is an interpreter incomparably beyond all that Man could devise: a sure, an unerring guide: *One;* not a thousand conflicting authorities; and one too, obtained by 'asking.'" And again, "what we called '*Scripture*,' is a collection of the writings of the Apostles, given by them authoritatively, as inspired by the Holy Ghost. If we believe their genuineness, and the truth of this pretension, we are then immediately in the divine presence;—we are listening to God Himself;—we are perfectly free from all tincture or vicinity of error."

Now admitting that Scripture is a guide *in itself* infallible,—*i. e.* that we cannot be misled (as in the works of fallible men) by errors *of the writer*, still, it can be an infallible guide *to us*, only so far as we understand its true sense; and in that, we know, all readers are not agreed. Admitting again that the Holy Spirit is an infallible interpreter of the Scriptures, still we know that different conclusions have been drawn from them, by persons, professing, each, to have prayed for, and trusting to have received, that spiritual help. Those therefore who speak of "solving every difficulty by reference to an unerring guide," so as to be "perfectly free from all tincture of error," must mean to refer to some *known* standard that shall decide *which* of the different interpretations of Scripture is the *right*, and *which* of the parties laying claim to the divine guidance of the unerring Spirit, is *really* so guided. That standard, therefore, to which their ultimate appeal is in fact made, must be,—however disguised in words,—*their own* conviction, and their own interpretation.

A sincere and candid appeal to the Scriptures themselves, made in charitable humility, and not as setting up our own judgment as the

standard and *rule of faith to others*, consists in simply stating what we consider as the scriptural grounds for what we hold and teach, setting forth, calmly, and without dogmatic arrogance, or bitter reproach, our reasons for believing that the sense we attach to the words of the Sacred Writers is correct, and consequently that a different interpretation is erroneous. And those who, after all, may not adopt the same conclusion, but whom we cannot *convict* of having been deficient in careful and candid research, or in humble prayer for divine grace, we must leave to the judgment of the All-seeing God: "judging nothing before the time, till the Lord come, who will make manifest the counsels of men's hearts."[1]

NOTE E, page 103.

On Private Judgment.

It is often asked whether we are to "set up each man's private interpretation of Scripture as his rule of faith, or to adopt and acquiesce in the Church's Tradition."[2] This alternative again has been objected to by some, who have called it a "Sophistical dilemma,"[3] and who maintain that the rule of faith is to be, neither the one nor the other of these, but "the Scriptures themselves." And this has been illustrated by an analogy drawn from the Statute-law of the realm, "which is each man's rule of life; not meaning, the law according to each man's private interpretation, but, the law itself:" and even so, it is said, "the Scriptures are our rule of faith;—the Scriptures themselves—not, the Scriptures as we chuse to interpret them."

This illustration is likely to be triumphantly accepted by the strongest advocates of authoritative Tradition. "The law is in-

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[1] Cor. iv. 5.

[2] This latter view is apparently supported by the common translation of a passage in which the Apostle Paul is represented as saying (1 Tim. iii. 15.) that "the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth." But this rendering depends entirely on a *punctuation* which there is every reason to consider as faulty, in attaching to the end of one sentence a clause which really belongs to the beginning of the next. By altering the punctuation we obtain a sense clearly intelligible, easily accordant with the context, and consistent with the general tenor of Scripture, instead of being the reverse. Στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα, ἐστὶ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον: "The mystery of Godliness" i. e. of the christian Religion) "is a pillar and ground of the truth, and confessedly great."

[3] It is evidently meant to be understood not as a Dilemma, but as a Disjunctive argument; wherein one side of an alternative is to be inferred from the rejection of the other.

deed," they may say, "of itself a sufficient guide in cases where *the meaning of the law is agreed on* by all; but in cases—such as occur every day—where the meaning of the law is disputed,—where two parties, for instance, claim each the same property, as lawfully his,—there is a manifest necessity for a *Court* of justice to decide authoritatively between the parties: such a Court being not a *different* rule of life to be put *instead* of the law, but a necessary adjunct to the law, which it enables us to comply with, by deciding as to its meaning. And this," they may say, "is what we contend for on behalf of Church-tradition. Granting that the Scriptures are the rule of faith, still, in cases (and they are numberless) where a passage of Scripture is understood differently by different persons, there is a necessity, (according to your own illustration) for some common authority, answering to a Court of justice, to decide finally which is right."

It seems indeed so palpably absurd to bid us decide a question as to the *meaning* of a law, or of Scripture, not by a Judge, but by the law itself,—by Scripture itself,—which is, to presuppose the true sense of it already ascertained and acknowledged,—this, I say, would be such manifest trifling, that one must suppose something different from this to have been intended by those who thus express themselves. Some I believe understand by the words "private interpretation," that which a man adopts from his own *inclination* or *caprice*. And certainly one may find persons who are prone to this kind of private interpretation;—who are accustomed to make up their minds first, as to what seems to them probable,—reasonable,—desirable; and then to put such a sense on Scripture as will best suit their purpose. Men's minds are perhaps the more easily reconciled to such a procedure from being familiar with it in what relates to *human* laws. There are few who scruple to avail themselves of any interpretation that the words of a law can be made to bear (however different from the known intention of the legislator), such as will afford them an advantage, and secure them from penalties. But it must be evident to any reflecting mind, that he who interprets Scripture according to his own wishes and preconceived theories, is, in reality, not accommodating himself to God's Word, but God's Word to himself.

Although however such a caution as the above is very needful, the alternative originally proposed remains as it was. Supposing a man sincerely desirous of laying aside all prejudice, and of conforming to God's will, is he to seek this end by exercising his own judgment on the Scriptures, or by implicitly adopting the tradition of his Church?[1]

If any one means by "private judgment," and "private interpre-

[1] "No prophecy is of private interpretation," (ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως) is an expression of the Apostle Peter (2 Pet. i. 20,) which has perhaps continued to lead some to adopt this latter course. But the sense of the words evidently is, "prophecy is not *self-interpreted*;" *i. e.* is to be explained not of *itself* but by the *event*.

tation," *unaided* judgment—*unassisted* study of Scripture,—it is plain that a man (even one possessing the most perfect leisure for study) who should proceed thus, and resolve to reject all instruction from his fellow-Christians, and to remain ignorant, by choice, of all that is recorded of the judgments of learned and pious men as to the meaning of the Scriptures, would not be taking the best means within his reach for attaining evangelical truth. For in any branch of natural Science, and even in Mathematics, no one pursues this course. Every student seeks to obtain elementary instruction—oral or written—from those more advanced than himself, and to avail himself of the labours of those who have gone before him; though he does not ultimately acquiesce in any conclusion on the bare unsupported authority of his teachers, but, on any disputed point, resorts to experiment, or to demonstration (according to the nature of the study), in order to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is right."

The question then will be, when fairly stated, not, whether men should follow the guidance of inclination and fancy; nor again, whether they should reject all human teaching, and refuse all assistance in their inquiries after religious truth; but, supposing a man willing to avail himself of all helps within his reach, and divest himself of prejudice, is he ultimately to decide according to the best of his own judgment, and embrace what appears to him to be the truth? or is he to forego the exercise of his own judgment, and receive implicitly what is decided for him by the authority of the Church, labouring to stifle any different conviction that may present itself to his mind?

That each Church has a right to prescribe *terms of communion* for its members, is admitted. As, when two parties (to revert to the illustration above alluded to) claim each the same property, under different interpretations of the Law, it is necessary that a Court of Justice, with the aid of adjudged and recorded cases, should decide,—so, when essential differences of faith and of worship have been based on different interpretations of Scripture, it is necessary that Church formularies and Church authorities should decide between them; not indeed following up the decision (like those of a Court of Justice) by *coercion;* but by excluding from the communion of that Church any who may be irreconcilably at variance with its Creed and practice.[1]

But the question now before us is, not, whether a Church has a right to prescribe the terms on which men are to be admitted and retained as members (for that is acknowledged); but whether church-decisions on matters of faith are binding on the *conscience*, and supersede private judgment.

Now it is most essential to keep in mind, that, in order to take a

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[1] See Essay IV. (Third Series,) § 7. p. 224.

practical view of this question, we must consider each man as understanding by "Church-authority" the declarations of *his own* Pastors, and of the authorized Confessions of Faith, &c. of the *particular religious Community* of which he is a member. For it would manifestly be a mere mockery to tell the great mass of unlearned Christians, "you must obey the Church; but it must be, not necessarily the community you belong to, but the *true* Church: you must be guided by the orthodox and regular Ministers of the Church; but not necessarily by *your own* teachers, unless you can ascertain their apostolical succession for eighteen centuries: you must examine all the decisions of general Councils, having first settled the claims of each to divine authority; you must consult the works of all the ancient Fathers, observing what are the points wherein they agree, and which of these are essential points; and this, after having first ascertained the orthodoxy of each, and decided on the degree of weight due to his opinion: and for this purpose, you must ascertain also the characters and qualifications of those modern divines who have undertaken to select, translate, and comment upon, some thirty or forty of those voluminous writers." To require all this, of the great body of plain ordinary Christians, who, by supposition, have not sufficient learning or ability to judge for themselves of the true sense of Scripture, would be an absurdity too gross to be seriously intended by any one. If we were to tell a plain unscientific man, ignorant of astronomy, and destitute of telescopes, that he must regulate his hours, not by *the Town-clock*, but by the Satellites of Jupiter, from observations and calculations of their eclipses, no one could be made to believe that we were speaking seriously.

It is plain, therefore, that to recommend ordinary Christians to give up their judgment to the guidance of "the Church," is, to refer them to the guidance of the pastors of their own denomination. They not only *will*, but they *must*, so understand the recommendation. They have *no means* of complying with it in any other way, unless they exercise (which, by supposition, they are forbidden to do) their own private judgment in deciding on the claims of their pastors.

The real question before us then—when cleared of those extraneous ones which tend to darken and perplex it,—may be simply and clearly exhibited by putting a supposed case: suppose several persons, brought up in different religious communities, to have each some doubt in his mind as to certain tenets, which he has been taught: one, for instance, has been taught that adults only ought to be baptized, and that infant-baptism is a nullity; another, that all administration of Baptism, and of the Eucharist, is altogether superstitious: another has been taught that christian ministers are sacrificing Priests, offering up the real body of Christ; another, that there ought to be no distinct order of ministers: one, again, has been taught that the invocation of Saints is agreeable to the designs of our Lord

and his apostles; another, that the worship of Christ Himself is idolatrous: &c.

Now suppose each of these persons to have carefully examined Scripture, with reference to those tenets, respectively; carefully and respectfully weighing the arguments of his teachers: and that the result is, his being convinced, according to the best judgment he can form, that what he has been taught by them is at variance with Scripture. The question now is, should we advise this man to abide by the conclusion which, according to his view, is scriptural? or, to resign his own judgment to that of his Church,—endeavouring to stifle his own conviction, and acquiescing in the decision his pastors have made for him?[1]

Towards those who may maintain conclusions at variance with our own on the above question, we are of course bound to abstain from reproachful censure, as long as they afford no grounds for presuming them otherwise than sincere. And I have no doubt that many have of late been led to adopt very heartily some most erroneous views in these matters, through the combined attractions of *Antiquity* and *Novelty*. Some degree of partiality for each of these probably exists—in very various proportions—in every human breast. And any system which offers gratification to *both* these feelings at once, is likely to be eagerly received by many; even though it should revive but a small portion of neglected truth, combined with a great mass of obsolete error.

In some instances, however, to my own knowledge, and probably in many others, such notions as I allude to have been more or less countenanced by persons who are aware,—or at least *were* at first aware—of their unsoundness, from their supposed tendency to promote piety and morality.

But the good effects resulting (and such often have, apparently at least, resulted) from any false system, have a continual and rapid tendency towards decay; while the evil fruits are borne in continually increasing profusion, and with more and more of poisonous luxuriance.

And I may add, that if persons professing an almost unbounded reverence for ecclesiastical rulers, as such, and by virtue of their office, are yet found treating with all possible contumely any individuals of them who refuse to join a certain party;—and if, though exalting Church-authority, and Unity, to the highest degree, they are found taking the most effectual steps to engender schism, by assembling in self-appointed synods, to denounce their brethren as heretics, —rejecting all appeal to regular ecclesiastical authorities,—and appealing, instead, to an assembly, lawfully constituted indeed in

[1] On this subject I have treated more fully in Essay IV. (Third Series), § 4, 5, 6. See also Dr. Hawkins on *Tradition*, and on the *Duty of Private Judgment*.

reference to its own department, but possessing no more right to decide on a charge of heresy, than is possessed by a court-martial,—if such glaring inconsistencies as these are exhibited between men's professed principles and their practice, they need not be surprised should it be doubted whether their professions are anything more than a mere pretence.

NOTE F, page 110.

On the Rules for the Application of Scripture Precepts.

It is sometimes urged that we are not bound to obey Christ's precepts strictly, because then we should be driven, not only to abstain from using coercive measures in behalf of our religion, but also to comply literally with the injunction "not to resist evil," but to turn our cheeks to the smiter, and surrender our goods to the plunderer.

Now most Christians consider these precepts as not designed to have reference to those particular *acts*, but as inculcating a patient, gentle, and forbearing *disposition, and tenor* of conduct. If however any one is satisfied from an examination of the whole New Testament, that a literal interpretation of these precepts is required by the general character of the christian Revelation, he is bound, then, literally to obey them. But the interpretation, whichever it be, that we adopt and act upon, ought to be founded not on our own *inclination*,—or our feeling more disposed to *chuse* the one interpretation than the other; but on a general and fair view of the rest of the New-Testament-Scriptures.

For instance, where we read of the civil Powers as "*ordained by God*, for the *punishment* of evil-doers," we may fairly conclude this to be inconsistent with unlimited submission to outrage and robbery. In the same manner, that the precept of "sell all, and give to the poor," could not have been meant as of universal and permanent application, is fairly inferred from the charge given to "them that are *rich*, in this world, *to be ready to give*;" since no Christians could have been rich, if all had been required to divest themselves of property, and also from Peter's expostulation with Ananias, whom he reminds that the property had been in his "own power."

And so also, if any one, on a careful and candid examination of the christian Scriptures, comes to the conclusion that to *maintain the Faith by secular coercion* is agreeable to the *general character of the Gospel-revelation*, then,—and then only,—he may resort to some interpretation

different from the obvious one, of our Lord's precepts. But unless we do make this appear, we are not at liberty so to explain his words. We are not allowed to interpret every precept of Scripture in the way we *like* best, so as to bring it into a conformity with our own notions, merely on the ground that SOME passages of Scripture are not to be understood in the strict literal sense. To make this a plea for affixing to *any* passage whatever *any* sense that may happen to suit our purpose, would be, not to take Scripture for our guide, but to make ourselves the guides of Scripture.

If any one who has been brought to believe that the whole Bible,—every part of it alike,—is to be applied, directly and literally, to ourselves in our ordinary conduct, sets himself honestly to endeavour after a conformity to the whole of the Old and of the New Dispensation at once, he will be proceeding fairly and consistently: and he will be rewarded probably, in being disabused of his error, from finding (unless very deficient in common intelligence) the utter *impossibility* of carrying out the principle in practice. But there are some, who, instead of this, allow themselves the liberty of selecting for themselves, according to their own fancy or convenience, *which* parts of the Old Testament they will conform to, and which disregard,—which parts of the New Testament they will understand as literally, universally, and permanently binding, and which, as figurative, local, temporary, &c.: and then they deceive themselves into the notion that they have the sanction of God's Word for the system they have thus *compiled* for themselves out of it, by the standard of their own inclinations.

As to the question immediately before us, it is probable that the chief source of perplexity and misapprehension to many minds, is, their confusing together the exercise of secular power by a person *who actually is* a Christian of a certain persuasion, and, his exercising that power *as* a Christian, or *as* a member of that particular Church, —*by virtue of* his being such. "Is it not allowable," one may hear it asked, "for a Christian, and a member of our Church, to be a magistrate? and is not the magistrate ordained for the punishment of evil doers? Of course both questions must be answered in the affirmative. Our Lord did not mean that civil rulers, exercising that coercive power without which secular society cannot subsist, should not be his disciples; but that they should not claim and exercise that power *as* his disciples, *by virtue of* their christian profession, or employ that *secular power in constraining men to acknowledge Him.* This would be to make his "kingdom one of this world:" but not so, the mere circumstance of secular power being exercised by one who is *actually a* Christian.[1]

[1] See Essay I. on the *Kingdom of Christ*, § 12.

In the many analogous cases which are of daily occurrence, men's common sense generally keeps them clear of such confusion of ideas. There are *e. g.* many literary and scientific Associations, which no one would speak of as having or claiming any *political* power; because though many of their members may chance to be legislators, judges, or magistrates, and may accordingly have to enact laws and enforce them by penalties, they do not exercise *this* power *as* members of a scientific Association, or in furtherance of their own scientific views.

ESSAY V.

COERCION IN MATTERS OF FAITH,

AND

MONOPOLY OF CIVIL RIGHTS BY ORTHODOX PROFESSORS.

ESSAY V.

ON COERCION IN MATTERS OF FAITH, AND MONOPOLY OF CIVIL RIGHTS BY ORTHODOX PROFESSORS.

Duty of Civil Magistrates in reference to Religion.

§ 1. The system, it should be observed, of excluding from the rank of Citizens and reducing to a state of Helotage, all who do not profess the religion prescribed by the Civil Power, falls far short of the proper conclusion which really follows from the principle on which that system is made to rest. For if it does come within the province of the Magistrate to provide for the spiritual welfare of the people by protecting them from religious error, as well as to protect their persons and property from outrage and fraud, he is bound to discharge this his duty *thoroughly*, by the use of the secular force which is his proper instrument. He beareth not the *sword* in vain: "he is ordained for the *punishment* of evil doers;" and if religious faults come within the description of that "evil doing" of which he is to take cognizance, he has no more right to tolerate heretics, than to tolerate robbers or assassins.

And here it may be proper to offer a few remarks on a question naturally arising out of the principle I am speaking of, and which its advocates are frequently, and I think fairly, called on to answer. If you declare it the duty,—it is urged—of a Sovereign or other Magistrate or Legislator to enforce the reception of a true religion, and to put down forcibly all false ones, are you not recommending a Chinese

or a Mahometan sovereign forcibly to suppress Christianity, — an Austrian, or Spanish, — Protestantism; and so, of the rest?[1]

To this question, though some answer in the affirmative and others in the negative, the difference between those thus seemingly opposed, is sometimes (as I shall proceed to shew) more apparent than real.

Some admit that it is the duty of a Sovereign who is a sincere Mahometan, or of whatever other persuasion, to use the same means for the support and propagation of his own Faith, and for the suppression of what he thinks false religion, that we, as conscientious members of our own Church, employ in support of *our* religion, and in opposition to any other.[2] Some again strenuously deny this position; which, —as they take for granted (though its advocates do not say so) —must be founded on the assumption "that there are a multitude of religions in the world of nearly equal value and authority."[3] "Keeping close then to the principle that

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[1] It is to be observed that I do not design here to treat of the questions concerning a *Church establishment*, generally; —questions involved in much additional perplexity by men's neglecting to begin by stating the sense in which they use the term "establishment." Not less than three or four very different meanings are commonly attached to it, involving at least as many different questions; each of which ought to be *separately* discussed.

On the subject of Endowments, I have offered some observations elsewhere; especially in Essay V. (Third Series,) § 10, p. 304.

[2] Of these persons some are advocates for *coercion*, while others speak merely of the duty of a man's *recommending, encouraging*, protecting, and endowing, what he regard. as true religion, and protesting and arguing against what he holds to b al . But th difference, though most important in it lf, may be waived, in reference to the immediate question; which is, simply whether it be a duty to *every* man to *act upon his own conviction in that way in which we* think it a duty to act upon ours. See *Lessons on Morals*, L. viii.

[3] Thus, Warburton has been censured as laying down that the truth or falsity of a religion is a question of little or no consequence; on the ground that he speaks of it as one which must be *waived* in any discussion of the propriety, generally, of establishing one religion in each country, inasmuch as the Legislature of *each* must be expected to regard its *own* religion as the true.

But universally, a man must expect to be, by many, set down at once as a "latitudinarian," if he attempts to bring into practice the rule (which so many seem not only to disregard in practice, but not even to understand) of doing as we would be done by. Most men are admirers of justice when justice happens to be on their side; but if it be proposed to allow to another the same liberties and

there is but one true religion in the world, they deny altogether the inference that if it be the duty of the king of England to propagate the Protestant faith, it must equally be the duty of the emperor of Austria to propagate Popery. The duty of every man, Papist or Protestant, is the same. God has vouchsafed to give unto each a revelation of his mind and will; and it is the duty of the sovereigns of England, and Austria alike, first to receive the truths of God's Word themselves, and then to spread those truths to the utmost of their powers to those around them." "The simple fact," they add, "is this, that there is but one true religion; and there never has been, nor ever will be, any other. All the rest are false, ruinous, and opposed to the honour of God. This cannot be too often or too strongly stated, or too constantly kept in view. The inferences are obvious. The Christian, who goes into a Pagan country, and there attacks the existing religion, exposes the character of the false gods, and instigates the people to throw off their yoke—acts laudably and well. The unbeliever, on the other hand, who goes forth among our Christian population, assaults their faith, speaks evil of the Son of God, and aims to overthrow his worship,—acts wickedly, and against the law of God. The magistrate who restrains and coerces, or punishes the first of these characters, opposes himself to God, and is a persecutor. The magistrate who restrains, coerces, or punishes the second, obeys the command of God, and is not a persecutor."[1]

Definition of Persecution.

§ 2. Now those who hold such language as this appear not to have a very distinct perception of the force of their own expressions, or of the conclusions to which their principles lead. I will take leave therefore to observe,

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rights that they claim for themselves, when his judgment differs from theirs, this will often be understood to mean that every one's judgment is equally correct; or that whether correct or erroneous is a matter of no moment.

[1] This passage is from a Protestant work, which appeared not many years ago

1. That one or two individuals are not authorized to make such an arbitrary innovation in language, as to insist that a term in such common use as "persecution" shall no longer be used in its commonly-received sense. Let any one maintain what opinions he thinks fit respecting the *thing* denoted by a certain word, even though he should stand alone in his opinion: but the meaning of a *word* must be what men understand by it; because the common usage of the language is that which *constitutes* the signification of each word.

Now the great mass of those who speak the English tongue, understand, I conceive, by religious "persecution," violence exercised or threatened against any religion, whether agreeing or disagreeing with their own: and would accordingly, though themselves members, suppose, of the Established Church, consider as a "persecutor" any Sovereign who should fine, imprison, and banish, the sect of the Quakers for instance, or the Anabaptists.

It may be said that a mere verbal question (such as this is) hardly deserves notice. And it may be admitted that if any one chuses, *avowedly*, and with fair warning, to employ some term in a sense different from the received one, his assuming this liberty need not be disputed. But it will often be found that arbitrary *unacknowledged* innovations in language lead to confusion of thought in the writer and perplexity to the reader.[1]

2. I would observe, that those who take upon them thus to limit the term "persecutor" to one who persecutes the teachers of a *true* religion, do not seem to perceive that in reality they attach no *blame* to *persecution*, (even in their own restricted sense of the word,) but only to religious *error*.[2]

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[1] "Credunt homines rationem suam verbis imperare: sed fit etiam ut verba vim suam super intellectum retorqueant et reflectant."—Bacon. *Nov. Org.* Aph. 59.

[2] See Essay V. (Third Series,) § 3, p. 257.

"The duty," they say, "of every man, Papist or Protestant, is the same; first to receive the truths of God's Word, and then to spread those truths to the *utmost of their power*, to those around them." The persecutor therefore is doing, it seems, only what *would* be quite right if he had "received the truths of God's Word" instead of adhering to an erroneous creed. The *only* fault he is charged with is one *common to him* with those who, holding the same erroneous creed, practise *no* persecution. He does more *mischief* perhaps than they; but the *fault*,—the only thing blamed—on this principle, being the very same in the persecutor and the non-persecutor, it is evident that *persecution itself* is not blamed at all. It is not a correct and accurate use of language to say that we blame a sovereign for killing or banishing one half of his subjects, if our meaning be in reality, that we blame him only for not deciding rightly *which* half it shall be.

3. Hence it follows that the maintainers of these doctrines, agree, in substance, though without perceiving it, with many of those whom, in words, they are opposed to; and who differ from them only in greater precision of language, and in analyzing the complex act which the others contemplate in the mass. In saying that it is right for every man—including a sincere Mahometan—to enforce by coercion what he considers as the true Faith, they do not imply that the Mahometan is *right*; they would admit that he is wrong, in his *faith*; but that his fault lies in his erroneous *conviction*, not in his *mode of acting on* his conviction. Now in this they completely agree with their professed opponents.

If one were to say that all jurymen are bound in duty to give a verdict according to their conviction, some might adduce a like objection; saying, What, do you commend a jury for giving a *wrong* verdict, from having come to a wrong conclusion respecting the case? No, it would be replied, we do *not* commend them; but we censure them for

having failed, through negligence or dullness, to arrive at a right conviction; not, for giving their verdict agreeably to their conviction.[1]

4. This also should not be overlooked: that all *dissuasives* from persecution must be, on the above principle, utterly vain and useless; since, if it is to be defined as consisting in the resort to coercion on behalf of error, every one will be sure to apply the term to his neighbour's conduct, and not to his own.

Danger to Christian Missionaries.

§ 3. If a Christian Missionary therefore who holds this principle, honestly avows it to a Mahometan or Pagan Prince, saying, "It is your duty to suppress by the sword all religions except the true one; and mine is the true;" the former of these propositions is so much more acceptable to human nature than the other, and so much more likely to be the *first* admitted, that the reply could hardly fail to be, "I agree with you: except that I hold *mine* to be the true religion:" and the probable result would be immediate sentence of death or banishment to the missionary and all his followers. It is no better than a mockery to say that it is the duty of pagans or other misbelievers first to embrace the truth, if we thus provide that those who might teach them the truth shall be silenced *before* they are able—and *on purpose* that they may *not* be able—to obtain a hearing.

Now to maintain a principle which obviously tends in practice to expose Christian missionaries to persecution,—in fact to spread persecution throughout the world, and to perpetuate error wherever it exists,—is a thing which at least ought not to be done lightly and inconsiderately. It may be said indeed that this result *ought* not to follow; for that all men ought to embrace the true Faith. And, doubtless, were all men to do so,—nay, were all to agree in *any* one religion,—

[1] See *Lessons on Morals*, L. viii.

there would be no religious persecution. But we are here speaking of what is to be rationally *expected,* as the actual result. Unless the *one Faith* be *previously* embraced, before the duty of exercising coercion is admitted,—unless the inculcators of that duty will consent (which we cannot reasonably expect) to hold in abeyance and *conceal* their principle till their faith shall have become universally predominant—the result must be that persecution—of Christians as well as of others—will take place, undeniably as the consequence,—wholly or partly,—of our own act. We are scattering through the world a "bane and antidote" with a full knowledge that most men will swallow the bane and reject the antidote.

It may perhaps be replied, that the first Christian preachers (and, in some degree, this holds good with their successors) did, knowingly, bring persecution on themselves, by preaching a Gospel unacceptable both to Jews and to Gentiles. But they did this, because they had received a *distinct revelation of certain truths;* together with an express command to declare those truths "to every creature," and to "make disciples of all nations." And if we find an express injunction in the New Testament (but not otherwise) to inculcate and practise as a duty the employment of secular force in the cause of our religion, we must, I admit, comply with that injunction, and abide the consequences. But when we search the New-Testament Scriptures for such injunction, we find the direct contrary, in almost every page. And if therefore Christian professors resolve thus to "tempt the Lord" by "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," and claiming the divine sanction for conduct which the Scriptures not only do not enjoin, but forbid, they are not God's martyrs, should the result be that "they who *draw* the sword, perish by the sword."

That persecution however, and all persecuting doctrines are practically hurtful to the cause of truth, hardly any one will ever be convinced, except by bitter experience, (and

often, not even by that) who has not first been convinced by the precepts and examples of Christ and his Apostles, how inconsistent such doctrines are with a "kingdom not of this world."

Mahometan Persecutors more consistent than Christian.

§ 4. It may be added, that on comparing together a Mahometan and a Christian, each employing coercion in behalf of his own Faith, the latter appears much the more censurable. His procedure is far less consistent with the spirit of the Gospel than of the Koran; whose author charged his disciples to propagate his creed by the sword.

Indeed it has often struck me that the rise and spread of the Mahometan religion, was calculated, and probably designed, as an admonition, and severe rebuke to Christians; who had introduced into their religion, contrary to its true character, and had acted on, the persecuting principles which Mahomet embodied in his. Many Christians, it may be hoped, received rightly, and profited by, this rebuke; others probably, among the multitudes of them who embraced Islamism, did so the more easily from being imbued with the spirit of it:—from preferring the Koran, which openly encouraged and recommended the principles they had been accustomed to act on, to the Gospel, which was glaringly at variance with them. If they resolved to adhere to these principles, they were gainers in point of consistency by becoming Mahometans.

But moreover, the employment of coercion is not only far less consistent with the spirit of Christ's religion than of Mahomet's, but also far more adverse to the propagation and maintenance of Gospel-truth, than of any other religion. For, (besides the proofs of this which I have offered elsewhere) it should be remembered that as the christian Faith is distinguished from others by resting on *evidence*, so, this foundation is practically weakened by every kind and degree of external compulsion and restraint. Those who would

fain "make assurance double sure" by *superadding* secular force to the force of argument, lose the advantage of this latter, in proportion as they call in "the arm of flesh" as an ally. For, it is manifest that force may be employed as well for falsehood as for truth. To those on the wrong side, or on the right, it is equally easy—and for those on the wrong, more natural and appropriate,—forcibly to stop the mouth of one who contradicts them, or (which comes to the same) to "stop their ears, and cast him out of the city, and stone him."[1] It is peculiar to truth when based on evidence, to call for a fair hearing of the evidence. But it calls for *no less* than a fair hearing. Truth is under a veil, and its proper aspect disguised, when supported by means which might equally support falsehood;—when its outward reception is forced on those who may be inwardly unconvinced;—and when consequently the conviction of any one who really *is* convinced, never can be *known* by others to be sincere. The soundest arguments lose most of their practical weight, when it is known that men are restrained by penalties from attempting to answer them. And thus Christianity is deprived of its great and characteristic support, through the want of faith manifested by its advocates.

Exclusion from citizenship by the Ancients.

§ 5. I have elsewhere offered remarks on some doctrines, at variance with what I have been now inculcating, and which, though not substantially novel, have been lately set forth with an originality of manner, and in a tone that entitles them to respectful consideration.

The exclusion from the rights of citizenship of all except a certain favoured class,—which was the system of the Grecian and other ancient Republics—has been vindicated by their example, and recommended for general adoption, by some writers; who have proposed to make *sameness of Reli-*

[1] Acts vii. 57.

gion correspond, in modern States, to the sameness of *Race*, among the ancients; — to substitute for their *hereditary citizenship* the profession of Christianity in one and the same *National Church.*

But attentive and candid reflection will shew that this would be the worst possible *imitation*, of one of the worst of the Pagan institutions; that it would be not only still more *unwise* than the unwise example proposed, but also even more opposite to the spirit of the *Christian Religion*, than to the maxims of *sound policy.*

Of the system itself, under various modifications, and of its effects, under a variety of circumstances, we find abundant records throughout a large portion of history, ancient and modern; from that of the Israelites when sojourners in Egypt, down to that of the Turkish Empire and its Greek and other Christian subjects. And in those celebrated ancient Republics of which we have such copious accounts in the classic writers, it is well known, that a man's being born of free parents within the territory of a certain State, had nothing to do with conferring civil rights; while his contributing towards the expenses of its government, was rather considered as the badge of an *alien* (Matt. xvii. 25); the imposing of a tax on the *citizens* being mentioned by Cicero[1] as something calamitous and disgraceful and not to be thought of but in some extraordinary emergency.

Nor were the proportionate *numbers* at all taken into account. In Attica the Metœci or sojourners appear to have constituted about a third of the free population; but the Helots in Lacedæmon, and the subjects of the Carthaginian and Roman republics, outnumbered the citizens, in the proportion probably of five, and sometimes of ten or of twenty to one. Nor again were alien-families considered as such in reference to a more *recent* settlement in the territory; on the contrary, they were often the ancient occupiers of the soil,

[1] *De Off.* b. ii. ch. xxi.

who had been subdued by another Race; as the Siculi (from whom Sicily derived its name), by the Siceliots or Greek colonists.

Iniquity and inexpediency of it.

§ 6. The system in question has been explained and justified on the ground that distinctions of Race implied important religious and moral differences; such, that the admixture of men thus differing in the main points of human life, would have tended, unless one Race had a complete ascendancy, to confuse all notions of right and wrong. And the principle, accordingly, of the ancient republics,—which has been thence commended as wise and good—has been represented as that of making agreement in religion and morals the test of citizenship.

That this however was not—at least in many instances—even the professed principle, is undeniable. The Lacedæmonians reduced to Helotism the Messenians, who were of Doric Race like themselves; while it appears from the best authorities, that the kings of those very Lacedæmonians were *of a different race* from the People, being not of Dorian but of Achaian extraction. There could not have been therefore, at least universally, any such total incompatibility between the moral institutions and principles of the different Races. The vindication therefore of the system utterly fails, even on the very grounds assumed by its advocates.

If however in any instances such an incompatibility did exist, or (what is far more probable) such a mutual jealousy and dislike originating in a narrow spirit of clanship—as to render apparently hopeless the complete amalgamation of two tribes as fellow-citizens on equal terms, the wisest,—the only wise—course would have been, an entire separation. Whether the one tribe migrated in a mass to settle elsewhere, or the territory were divided between the two, so as to form distinct independent States,—in either mode, it would have been better for *both* parties, than that one should remain tributary

subjects of the other. Even the expulsion of the Moors and Jews from Spain, was not, I am convinced, so great an evil, as it would have been to retain them as a degraded and tributary class, like the Greek subjects of the Turkish empire.

For, if there be any one truth which the deductions of reason alone, independent of history, would lead us to anticipate, and which again, history alone would establish, independently of antecedent reasoning, it is this: that a whole class of men placed permanently under the ascendancy of another, as subjects, without the rights of citizens, must be a source, at the best, of weakness and generally of danger to the State. They cannot well be expected, and have rarely been found, to evince much hearty patriotic feeling towards a community in which their neighbours look down on them as an inferior and permanently degraded species. While kept in brutish ignorance, poverty, and weakness, they are likely to feel—like the ass in the fable—indifferent whose panniers they bear. If they increase in power, wealth, and mental development, they are likely to be ever on the watch for an opportunity of shaking off a degrading yoke. Even a complete general despotism, weighing down all classes without exception, is, in general, far more readily borne, than invidious distinctions drawn between a favoured and a depressed race of subjects; for men feel an *insult* more than a *mischief* done to them;[1] and feel no insult so much as one daily and hourly inflicted by their immediate neighbours. A Persian subject of the great King had probably no greater share of civil rights than a Helot; but he was likely to be less galled by his depression, from being surrounded by those who, though some of them possessed power and dignity as compared with himself, yet were equally destitute of civil rights, and abject slaves in common with him, of the one great despot.

It is notorious accordingly how much Sparta was weak-

[1] Ἀδικούμενοι, ὡς ἔοικεν, οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον ὀργίζονται, ἢ βιαζόμενοι.—Thucyd. b. i. § 77.

ened and endangered by the Helots, always ready to avail themselves of any public disaster as an occasion for revolt. The frightful expedient was resorted to of thinning their numbers from time to time by an organized system of massacre; yet, though great part of the territory held by Lacedæmon was left a desert,[1] security could not be purchased even at this price.

We find Hannibal, again, maintaining himself for sixteen years in Italy against the Romans; and though scantily supplied from Carthage, recruiting his ranks, and maintaining his positions, by the aid of Roman subjects. Indeed, almost every page of history teaches the same lesson, and proclaims in every different form, "How long shall these men be a snare unto us? Let the people go, that they may serve their God; knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" "The remnant of these nations which thou shalt not drive out, shall be pricks in thine eyes, and thorns in thy side."

But besides the other causes which have always operated to perpetuate, in spite of experience, so impolitic a system, the difficulty of *changing* it when once established, is one of the greatest. The false step is one which it is peculiarly difficult to retrace. Men long debarred from civil rights, almost always become ill fitted to enjoy them. The brutalizing effects of oppression, which cannot immediately be done away by its removal, at once furnish a pretext for justifying it, and make relief hazardous. Kind and liberal treatment, if very cautiously and judiciously bestowed, will *gradually* and *slowly* advance men towards the condition of being worthy of such treatment: but treat men as aliens or enemies,—as slaves, as children, or as brutes, and they will *speedily* and *completely* justify your conduct.

The Vaudois, indeed, oppressed as they have long been by their government, afford, if we may rely on statements which seem well worthy of credit, a remarkable exception to this

[1] Thucyd. b. iv.

rule. If the accounts we have be correct, of their near approach, both in the purity of their religion, and in their character, to the primitive Christians, we may infer that in both instances the same religion has operated to produce—as it was designed to do—the same effects on the character.[1]

Unchristian character of it.

§ 7. But I have said not only that the policy of these ancient States was unwise, but that for Christians to make fellow-membership of the same Church, the foundation of that agreement in religion and morals which is to be the test of citizenship, is the *worst* possible imitation of a bad example. That anomalous system which some regard as Christianity, but which is in reality an incongruous mixture of Judaism, Christianity, and Paganism, is open to some peculiar objections which do not equally lie against the several systems, taken singly, of which it is compounded.

The system of the ancient States, bad as it was, was exempt from one great evil,—that of holding out a bounty on hypocritical apostasy. When one Race, whether distinguished by the colour of their skin,—their hereditary religious rites,—or otherwise—is excluded, permanently, generation after generation, from civil rights, pernicious and dangerous as such a system is, it is still far preferable to that of making the adherence to a national Church—a Church *open to all* who chuse to profess adherence to it—the test of citizenship. For, under this system, whoever is in his heart indifferent about all religion, unscrupulous in point of veracity, and also dead to all sense of disgrace, will not fail to make an *outward profession* of the national religion, when allured by the prospect of advantage.

Hypocrisy however, I have heard it urged, can never,

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[1] See Dr. Gilly's accounts of this interesting people; and also the extraordinary history of their glorious return, by Arnaud, translated, and illustrated with original plates, by H Acland

do all we can, be rooted out of the world. This is true; and the same may be said of many other evils; but we do not on that account court them as goods, and study to increase their amount. *Unavoidable* evils, or those which can only be avoided by incurring greater, we submit to as far as they *are* unavoidable, and *because* they are so. For instance, no vigilance can completely secure us against false professions of friendship, made from mercenary motives; but there are few persons who would take measures to increase the number of insincere and pretended friends. And yet, in that case, there is some counterbalancing advantage: real services may be done, from mercenary motives, by those whose affection is a mere pretence. And it is the same with insincere pretensions to moral virtue: one who abstains from bad actions, not through any virtuous principle, but merely for the sake of worldly advantage, is a better member of society, though not a better man, than a bare-faced profligate; and he who relieves the poor, not out of charity but ostentation, benefits *them* at least, though not himself. But *religious* hypocrisy is an unmixed evil, and has no countervailing advantage; since an insincere profession of faith benefits no one, and only tends to cast a suspicion, when detected, on the sincerity of others.

But many, it may be said,—and no doubt with truth,—have, under such a system, embraced our religion with perfect sincerity, uninfluenced by any secular motives. These persons then, by the very supposition, (and probably many *others also* who were *prevented* from becoming converts through a dread of the imputation of unworthy motives) *would* have joined our Church under a system of perfect religious *freedom*. The opposite system therefore has no effect on those of a disinterested character, except to present an additional obstacle to their conversion, and to visit it with an additional penalty; a penalty the most galling to a generous mind. When a man has the prejudices of education to encounter, and probably the esteem and affection

of his dearest friends to forego, he has surely enough difficulties in the way of an unbiassed judgment, and a resolution to act upon it, without our gratuitously superadding a still greater hindrance,—the impossibility of clearing his character from the suspicion, however undeserved, of being a hypocritical and mercenary apostate.

The holding out of secular inducements then, in the shape of admission to civil privileges, while it never can *produce* conformity, except in men of the basest character, may have the effect of preventing it, in many of those of an opposite character. When therefore we divide the subjects of any State into a privileged and a degraded caste, we are guilty of a grievous error; but when, in addition to this, we make a provision for recruiting continually the ranks of the dominant class from the scum and refuse of the depressed class, and at the same time for excluding as far as possible the more high-minded of that depressed class, we have carried to the utmost the perverse ingenuity of absurd legislation.

National Church.

§ 8. It will be observed that in the present argument I have all along spoken of the proposed bond and test of citizenship as consisting in "conformity to one and the same *National Church;*" using this phrase, as being more precise, in preference to that of "profession of Christianity," which evidently must be meant to convey, in the theory alluded to, the very same sense. For it is plain that this is the only sense in which the "profession of Christianity" could tend to secure the very object proposed, of establishing that "*agreement* in religion and morals" which is to be made the test of citizenship. Nothing, it is evident, would be gained as to this point, by merely establishing the requisition that all the citizens should bear the mere *title* of Christians, while they were left to be Christians of distinct Churches, totally independent of the State and

of each other. The thing proposed therefore manifestly is, that some National Church should be established, so comprehensive as to comprise as nearly as possible all Christians; and that all who refused to join this Church, whether Christians, Jews, or of any other denomination, should be excluded from civil privileges.

This is important to be observed; because though I should gladly see the terms of communion of every church placed on the most comprehensive footing that is compatible with the essential objects of a Church, there are some differences among Christians (even supposing all difficulties relative to points of *faith*, to be got over) which I think must, even in the views of the most sanguine, preclude them from ever being members of the same *religious* community.

Those, for instance, who maintain the absolute unlawfulness of endowments, could not, in any way that I can conceive, become members of a church possessing endowments. It might indeed be urged, that those who object to endowments may claim from the others a concession of the point; inasmuch as they plead a *scruple of conscience* against listening to what they call a *hired* ministry; (meaning in reality, *un*hired, *i. e.* supported by endowments, instead of wages from their congregations;) while the others, though regarding endowments as more desirable, cannot have a conscientious scruple against listening to an unendowed minister. But those who feel as strongly as I do the dangerous and corrupting tendency of what is called the "Voluntary System," do entertain a conscientious scruple against adopting it by *choice*, when there is an *alternative*.

No one should therefore be so far misled by specious language as to calculate on none but Jews and Infidels being, under the proposed system, excluded from civil rights.

But there is another circumstance also which must not be left out of the calculation; viz. that many Christians who might be willing to conform to a Church constituted on certain principles, provided it were left to their *free choice*, would

utterly refuse conformity if enforced under the penalty *of political degradation.* "It matters nothing," says Dean Swift, very truly, "how wide you make the door, for those who take a pride and a pleasure in not coming in." Now the very recipe for producing, in many minds, this pride and pleasure, is, to make conformity a test for admissibility to civil rights. And though such a disposition is faulty, we are surely not thereby justified in holding out a temptation to commit the fault, and then visiting it unmercifully. At any rate we must calculate on meeting with it. Many would be found stickling for even minute points, (which, under a system of perfect freedom, they would have readily conceded,) lest they should be suspected of yielding from unworthy motives, and purchasing, by concessions against their conscience, the rights that were unjustly withheld. So that even among those brought up as Christians, the system would have the effect of alluring into conformity the worldly, the unscrupulous, and the shameless; while on men of the opposite character it would have the opposite effect. Now this, as I have before observed, may be reckoned the very perfection of bad legislation.

Decision of the Lord Jesus.

§ 9. Yet unwise and unsafe in a legislative point of view as such a system has been shown to be, I regard its political inexpediency as a trifle, in comparison of its contrariety to the whole spirit of the Gospel, and the false and injurious impression it tends to create of the character of our religion.

As far as the religious duty of a Christian is concerned, the whole question as to the treatment of persons of a different persuasion, seems to have been long ago decided, by our Lord's answer to those who allege their scruples respecting the submission of men professing the true religion, to the civil government of a heathen prince. "Is it lawful," they inquired, "to give tribute to Cæsar?" Our Lord's answer, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God

the things that are God's," lays down a principle which must surely be as applicable to the case of *fellow-subjects*, as of *rulers*. Cæsar's being an idolater, did not, it seems, impair his right, as a civil governor, to the obedience and the tribute due to him *as* civil governor, so long as his commands did not interfere with the service due to God. Neither therefore can the religious errors of our fellow-citizens impair their rights as citizens, so long as the exercise of these does not prevent *us* from serving God after the dictates of our own conscience. For, a prince can have but the same claim to the rights of a prince, that a subject has to those of a subject. The plea of *self-defence*, indeed, may justify our withholding either the one or the other; as in the case of King James II. and his descendants; whose sovereignty seemed incompatible with the rights of their subjects: but no *other* plea can justify our withholding either. It might indeed be more unsafe, but would hardly have been more unjust, for the Jews of old to refuse tribute to a heathen emperor, than for us to refuse, on religious grounds, civil rights to our fellow-subjects, when no case of danger to ourselves from the concession, can be made out.

For if—when Jesus at his examination before the Roman governor, declared his "kingdom to be not of this world,"—He is to be considered as having designed a reservation to his disciples of a power to establish, whenever they should be strong enough, the political ascendancy of his religion, reducing all who would not embrace it to the condition of vassals under tribute, without the rights of citizens,—let any one reflect, who attributes to Him this meaning, what a disingenuous subterfuge they are imputing to Him. He meant, I have heard it said, not to claim for Christians, as Christians, any peculiar political power *beyond* what was claimed and exercised by *every* tribe, race, or clan of men, in any Country in which they could possess themselves of sufficient influence. Now every Tribe having been accustomed (as has been above remarked) to establish, wherever

they were able, a monopoly of political rights for themselves, keeping all other inhabitants of the same territory in a state of tributary subjection, this was doubtless the very thing apprehended by those who persecuted the early Christians as disaffected persons. They probably understood the renunciation by Jesus of temporal sovereignty, exactly according to the above interpretation; and what is more, it would be hard to prove that they were not justified in their conduct, supposing that interpretation to be a true one. For to what would the disavowal, on the part of Christians, of political designs, have amounted, on that supposition? Merely, that they were content to forego all such claims till they should be strong enough to enforce them: but that whenever, and wherever, they might amount either to a majority, or a sufficiently powerful minority to exercise dominion (as the Lacedæmonians over the Helots, or the Romans over the Provincials,) they would subjugate, in like manner, all who did not belong to their own Body, and exclude them from the rights of citizens.

These men, it might have been urged, and probably *was* urged,—by their opponents, profess their readiness to "pay tribute to Cæsar," and to honour kings and all who are in authority: but when they acquire sufficient power, they will doubtless enact that none but those who belong to their own Body shall *be* in authority: Cæsar, and every other sovereign and magistrate, they will pronounce disqualified, except on condition of embracing their faith, not only for his office, but for all the rights of a citizen: they really are aiming at the subversion of the existing governments; and only waive their pretensions to political domination till they shall have become strong enough to assert them: we must endeavour therefore, in self-defence, to put down this rising sect.

Such, I have little doubt, were the suspicions entertained (and, if the foregoing interpretation be correct, justly entertained) by the early adversaries of Christianity. And how

did the Apostles and early Apologists meet these suspicions? By earnestly disavowing all designs of political interference, and *on that ground claiming exemption* from the censure of the civil magistracy, as not proper objects of political jealousy, since they did not aim at political ascendancy. I need not cite the numerous and well-known passages to this effect which occur in the Acts, and in many of the Epistles. But they *did* aim at political ascendancy, if, while seeking by conversions to increase their numbers, they secretly designed to monopolize, as soon as they should be strong enough, the rights of citizenship, and to hold in subjection as vassals all who did not belong to their Body.

The conclusion therefore seems inevitable, unless we attribute *insincerity* to the early Christians, and to their Master, that his declarations cannot bear the interpretation I have alluded to; and that we must understand his description of his kingdom as not of this world, in the plain simple sense, as debarring all Christians from any claim to monopolize political power to themselves, either *as* Christians or as members of any particular church;—from making subscription to their creed a test of citizenship. If He and his Apostles did *not* mean to forbid this, in what terms *could* they have forbidden it?

Christian principle tolerant.

§ 10. Of course it was to be expected, that as Christianity succeeded in improving the tone of morals, many abominations—such as gladiatorial shows, and impure rites—which were tolerated, or even enjoined, among Pagans, would, very justly, be prohibited by Christian legislators: but it is *as* being *immoral and pernicious actions* that we are bound as legislators to the forcible suppression of these. It sounds, indeed, very plausible to speak of political society being ordained for higher purposes than the temporal welfare of mankind, and the security of their persons and property;—the purposes (as they have been contemptuously styled) of mere police or

traffic: but after all, it is plain that external conduct alone comes directly and completely within the reach of the *coercive* power with which the magistrate is armed; and external conduct does not constitute virtue and religion. The very same action may be morally virtuous or vicious, according to the motives of the agent; and legislative enactments do not control motives. *All* lawgivers forbid us to *steal* our neighbour's goods; but it is only a divine lawgiver that can effectually forbid us to covet them. It sounds well to speak of political society deciding what is or is not essential and eternal, and giving to its decisions (what is God's alone to give) the "sanction of the truth of God:" but after all, this sanction can only extend to those who *believe* such and such an institution to be conformable to the truth of God: and a rational belief of this must be based on evidence very different from that of its being the law of the land. The legislator may, indeed, take upon him to chuse for the people what their religion shall be, and to declare authoritatively that it is sanctioned by the truth of God; but though he can enforce outward conformity, he cannot enforce well-grounded conviction.

And it should be remembered, that since it is a point of morality to "submit to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake," and to "render unto all their due, tribute, to whom tribute is due, fear, to whom fear, honour, to whom honour," it follows that, if it be a part of the province of the civil magistrate to enforce not only abstinence from crime, but religious and moral agreement among all the citizens, then, those Christians who adhered to their faith under Pagan governments, were transgressing the precepts of their own Apostles; and the same, with Christians in Mahometan, and with Protestants in Roman Catholic States. For, *right*, and *obligation*, must be reciprocal: wherever the lawful magistrate has a *right* to *enjoin*, the subject must be *bound* to *obey*.

The Apostles, therefore, it is plain, must have had a far

different notion of the proper province of the civil magistrate; to whom they exhorted their followers to render the obedience due, without the least idea that this extended to matters of religion. For we cannot surely suppose that the Apostles intended to assign unquestioned authority in religious concerns to the magistrate, *provided he were a Christian,* but *not otherwise.* This would, indeed, have been to make Christ's kingdom emphatically a "kingdom of this world;"—by assigning to a christian magistrate a degree of political power which they denied to a heathen;—and also a "kingdom divided against itself;" since it would have sanctioned the practice, of which history presents us with so many examples, of Christians of one persuasion employing the secular arm to put down those of another.

The mode by which the maintainers of the above theory usually endeavour to avoid this difficulty, is by alleging that since, after all, we must obey God rather than Man, subjects are bound to follow the magistrate's directions in respect of religion, so far, and only so far, as they in their conscience believe these to be conformable to the divine will. This may safely be conceded; since it requires no more compliance towards the *magistrate* than is due towards each of our *neighbours;* whom we clearly ought to agree with in respect of religion, so far as we conscientiously believe them to be in the *right.* But this also ought surely to be conceded; that a man who conscientiously differs in his religious belief, either from the magistrate or from any of his neighbours, ought not to be either compelled to disown or conceal his belief, or (so long as he shows himself an orderly, peaceable, and upright member of society) to be excluded from the rights of citizenship in what relates to temporal concerns. Now this is all I contend for.

It has however been urged, again, that there is no ground for complaining of injustice or intolerance in our precluding any but Christians from civil rights, inasmuch as every master of a family assumes the right of requiring all the

members of his household to profess the religion he thinks best; and requires, if he judges it proper, that his servants should attend family-prayers. And certainly every man has this right in his *own house;* nor have any of his servants, or of those who may wish to engage in his service, any rights at all, relatively to his family, except what he may chuse to grant them. He may determine what he thinks fit, not only as to the religion, but as to the stature and personal appearance of his servants. The argument is conclusive, if we admit (and not otherwise) that each country *belongs* to its king, or other governors, in the same manner as the house or land of any individual belongs to the owner. But no one, I apprehend, will, in the nineteenth century, openly maintain this. And that the above argument proceeds on such a supposition, is a sufficient refutation of it. The rulers are now, at least, universally admitted to be the governors, not the *owners*, of the Country. Even the most absolute monarch in modern Europe, professes to govern, not (as a master does his servants) for *his own* benefit, but for that of his people; and to impose no burden, privation, or restriction, on any class of his subjects, except what is counterbalanced by the general good of the community.

It would not have been worth while therefore to notice such an argument, but, that it has, if rightly applied, great weight on the opposite side. Every one, it is admitted, should be allowed to do what he will with any thing that belongs to him, provided he does not molest his neighbours. It would be unjust for any of *them* to interfere with the management of his household, on the ground that he does not lay down such rules for it as *they* think best; and to impose restrictions on him, compelling or forbidding him to take into his service men of this or that class or religious persuasion. Now let it be observed that this is precisely the kind of interference—and the only kind—which I am deprecating. We may think that a man of this or that persuasion is not the fittest person to hold offices under the Crown, or to sit in

Parliament, or to be a servant in a gentleman's family; but *that* is a point for the Crown,—for the electors,—for the master,—to consider. He who would withdraw the matter from their discretion, and limit their choice, by maintaining a restrictive law, which says, "you *shall not* appoint such and such persons," is evidently interfering with their general right to appoint whom they please; and is consequently bound to show that some danger to the community is likely to ensue from leaving them at liberty.

Province of Civil Rulers.

§ 11. It may be proper to observe in conclusion, that in protesting against the claim of the civil magistrate to prescribe to his subjects what shall be their religious faith, I have confined myself to the consideration that such a decision is *beyond the province* of a secular ruler; instead of dilating, as some writers have done, on the impossibility of having any ruler whose judgment shall be *infallible*. That infallibility cannot be justly claimed by uninspired Man, is indeed very true, but nothing to the present purpose. A man may claim—as the Apostles did—infallibility in matters of faith, without thinking it allowable to enforce conformity by secular coercion; and, again, on the other hand, he may think it right to employ that coercion, without thinking himself infallible. In fact, *all* legislators do this in respect of temporal concerns: such as confessedly come within the province of human legislation. Much as we have heard of *religious* infallibility, no one, I conceive, ever pretended to universal *legislative* infallibility. And yet every legislature enforces obedience, under penalties, to the law it enacts in civil and criminal transactions; not, on the ground of their supposing themselves exempt from error of judgment; but because they are bound to legislate—though conscious of being fallible—according to the best of their judgment; and to enforce obedience to each law till they shall see cause to repeal it. What should hinder them, if religion be one of the things coming within their province, from enforcing (on

the same principle) conformity to their enactments respecting that? A lawgiver sees the expediency of a uniform rule, with regard, suppose, to weights and measures, or to the descent of property; he frames, without any pretensions to infallibility, the *best* rule he can think of; or perhaps, merely a rule which he thinks AS GOOD as any other; and enforces uniform compliance with it: this being a matter confessedly within his province. Now if religion be so too, he may feel himself called on to enforce uniformity in that also; not believing himself infallible either in matters of faith or in matters of expediency; but holding himself bound, in each case alike, to frame such enactments as are in his judgment advisable, and to enforce compliance with them; as King James in his prefatory proclamation respecting the Thirty-nine Articles, announces his determination to allow of "no departure from them whatever." I do not conceive that he thought himself gifted with infallibility; but that he saw an advantage in religious *uniformity*, and therefore held himself authorized and bound to enforce it by the power of the secular magistrate. The whole question therefore turns, not on any claim to infallibility, but on the extent of the *province of the civil magistrate*, and of the applicability of legal coercion, or of exclusion from civil rights.

Whether these arguments are *unanswerable*, is a question of *opinion*; and one on which it would, of course, be especially unbecoming in me to decide: but that they have been hitherto *unanswered*—not even an attempt having been made (as far as I know) to refute any one of them—is a matter of *fact*: and it is a fact the more important, inasmuch as I have reason to believe they are not unknown to the principal advocates of the opposite conclusions.

DISCOURSE I.

REMARKS

ON THE

BEST MODE OF CONVEYING SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION.

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A CONSCIENTIOUS and well-educated Christian Minister needs not to be reminded that, as the great source of religious knowledge is the Holy Scriptures, so, it is in explaining these to the People, and leading them to study Scripture for themselves with understanding, and with profitable application, that he will be performing the chief duty of a religious instructor. But the Bible is often perused by Christians, either without even any effort of the mind to derive instruction and improvement from it, but as if the mere perusal were of itself a pious and acceptable deed; or again, with some misapprehension of the manner in which it is to be studied, and of the purposes for which each book was composed. To guide our hearers, therefore, to a profitable study of that which is "able to make them wise unto salvation," is a task which calls not only for our earnest diligence, but for much thoughtful discretion and caution.

I was induced therefore, on the occasion of an ordination,[1] to address to the Candidates and to the rest of the congregation, some suggestions on the subject; the substance of which I now venture to lay before the Public, nearly in the same form in which it was first printed for the use of the persons immediately addressed, and without thinking it necessary to apologize for, or to alter, the style of expression originally adopted with a view to oral delivery.

[1] At Christ Church, Dublin, in the year 1830.

I have written, for the sake of greater brevity, not in the form of a regular treatise, so much as in that of brief heads, to be developed and filled up, should my readers think it worth while, in their own private reflections. And on this ground I will trust to their excusing what might otherwise be censured as an unceremonious conciseness of manner.

Explanation needed in respect of chapters and verses.

§ 1. First. We should explain repeatedly to our hearers, that the division of the Scriptures into *chapters* and *verses* is not the work of the sacred Writers; and was introduced, in much later times, merely for convenience of reference. Strange as it may seem, there is no inconsiderable number of persons,—even of what are called the educated classes,—who are ignorant of this;[1] and suppose the chapters and verses to be either the divisions made by the authors themselves, or at least, adopted by editors as a natural way of arranging these writings, so as best to exhibit their sense, and separate one branch of a discourse from another; this being the purposed object of any author who *himself* divides a work of his own into chapters or sections. It is true, the most moderate degree of attention will shew, that verses, and even chapters, often conclude in the midst of a discourse,—of an argument,—or even of a sentence. But even such as are the most fully aware of the fact, are often led, by early custom, or by the analogy of chapters, sections, and paragraphs, in any other book (which really *are* the divisions, intended by the author,) to read the Scriptures with too much reference to these arbitrary divisions, and thus, of course, in many instances, to take, in consequence, a very different view of the sense of the sacred writers. For I need hardly remind you, that the meaning attached to any treatise depends not merely

[1] I mention this as a fact coming under my own knowledge; and I may add, that one of these persons, on being informed how the fact stands, deprecated the undeceiving of the people at large, for fear of unsettling their minds!

on the words used, but also on the arrangement and distribution of what is said.

The evil I have been alluding to, is aggravated in the case of those persons who make a practice, in their private perusal of the Scriptures, of reading the lessons for the day, —the chapters appointed to be publicly read in church,— and confining themselves to this course of study; as if the lessons had been selected with a view to the *private*, domestic use of each member of the Church. On such a plan some portions of Scripture, not only instructive, but needful for the right understanding of other parts, are left unread; while other portions are read over and over, but often in such an order, or rather such a disorder,—so broken up, disjointed, and thrown together in fragments, that much of what might easily be made intelligible to a reader of ordinary abilities and acquirements, is either very little understood, or, sometimes, most hurtfully misunderstood.

Explain to your hearers, therefore,—and, not content with having explained it once for all, *remind* them frequently of,— the origin and design of the chapters and verses; warn them against the mistakes likely to result from reading with reference to them; and advise them, in their private studies, usually to take up some one book, or considerable portion of a book, and apply themselves to that, at intervals, till they have gone through it. It would be all the better if they were advised not to make a practice of beginning (in each day's reading) at the beginning, or ending at the end, of a chapter; but to endeavour to counteract the habit of attending to chapters. And every reader of Scripture who seeks for a clear understanding of what he is reading, should be admonished, among other things, always to look back, before he begins any portion, to the part immediately preceding; which will often be quite necessary to throw light on what follows.

For instance, in reading any one of our Lord's discourses, much will often depend on our being aware whether it was addressed, "to his disciples," or "to the multitude:" a cir-

cumstance which the sacred writers almost always take care to notice; but which is not thought of by the reader who begins always at the beginning of a chapter, and consequently, in many instances, in the very middle of a discourse.

In other parts of Scripture also, various difficulties and mistakes, and various kinds and degrees of indistinctness of meaning, arise from the same cause. And I think it will be profitable to collect and lay before your people occasionally, some instances of this kind, in order to impress more effectually on their minds the caution I have been speaking of. For instance, to take one that has chanced to catch my view on opening the Bible almost at random, if you look to the 10th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, you will see at once that the lesson the Apostle is inculcating in the latter part of the chapter concludes with a sentence which is made the first verse of the succeeding chapter.

Again, you may easily point out, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, that the 3d, 4th, and 5th chapters can hardly be, any one of them, distinctly understood by itself: especially as a kind of parenthesis is introduced at verse 6th of the 3d chapter which is continued to verse 6th of the ensuing.

Again, the 27th chapter of Genesis, which is one of those appointed to be read as a Sunday lesson, is but too apt to leave a mischievously false impression on the mind of one who does not read the previous portion of history contained in the 25th chapter, verse 23d (a chapter which is *not* read as a Sunday lesson); the impression, namely, of Jacob's having obtained the birthright, and the consequent preference of his descendants over his brother's, as a *consequence* of his fraud; though the divine decree had been declared before the children were born; and the only fruit to Jacob's fraud was exile, distress, and humiliation to himself, and grief to the partial mother who had prompted him to the sin.[1]

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[1] See Benson's *Hulsean Lectures*, Second Course.

A still more important instance perhaps is that of the 7th and 8th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Hardly any one, I think, reading the whole passage continuously, without any regard to the arbitrary break at the close of the 7th chapter, would be in danger of supposing that the Apostle Paul, though speaking in the first person, is describing his own actual character, in his regenerate, sanctified state, when he describes a man "sold under sin,"—"brought into subjection to the law of sin," — "doing the evil that he would not," — "not doing the good that he would," — and living a life of wretched contradiction to his own judgment. The contrast is so marked between this description, and that which immediately follows, of "those that are in Christ Jesus," (including, no one can doubt, the Apostle himself,) "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," who "being spiritually-minded have life and peace," "and through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh," — the contrast, I say, is so marked between these two descriptions, that there would be little danger of any one's supposing they could be meant to apply to one and the same person at the same time. But the mistake, which is not unfrequently made, is the result, I conceive, of the reader's being accustomed to stop at the end of the 7th chapter, and then, a day after, or perhaps a week, or a month after, to begin the perusal of the 8th chapter, as if it were a distinct treatise.

The writings of the Apostle Paul do certainly contain many difficulties; but the easiest book in the world might be made unintelligible by being studied in that manner.

In the instance now before us, you may easily, I think, point out to the learner, that in the 5th and 6th verses of the 7th chapter, the Apostle is contrasting the conditions, of "those who are in the flesh," and "bring forth fruit unto death," and those who are in Christ, who "bring forth fruit unto God:" and that he proceeds to expand and develop that contrast more fully, in what follows. After having noticed (in the earlier part of the 7th chapter) the case of a

Gentile destitute of revelation, he proceeds to describe, first, the person who is "under the law," with a knowledge and approbation of what is good, and an habitual practice of what is evil; and then (from the beginning of ch. viii.) the person who is "in Christ Jesus," and "walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And that the Apostle really is describing two different, and indeed opposite characters (which those only I think will doubt, who have been early accustomed to peruse chapters as so many distinct treatises, you may easily evince to those of your hearers who are attentive and reflecting, by joining together portions of each description, and pointing out the monstrous and absurd incongruity that would result; as a proof that they cannot be both applicable to the same person at the same time: as for instance,—

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, but *who do the evil they would not*, and do not the *good that they would*: . . . for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* . . . That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; *for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.* . . . So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God, but we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; *but I am carnal, sold under sin:*" &c., &c.

I have insisted the more earnestly on the right interpretation of this passage, because the opposite interpretation, goes to nullify practically, all our labours in the inculcation of moral duty. For, when any *description* or *example* is set before men, by way of pattern, we may be quite sure that *this* will be made the *standard*, and that general principles and precepts will be practically explained, and limited, and modified, in their application, according to that standard. We can never hope that our hearers, though living in sin, and

only occasionally bewailing it, will really feel much alarm and uneasiness, while they believe themselves to be on a level with the Apostle Paul.

The interpretation I have been censuring I have heard defended as a mode of inculcating the important lesson, of the necessity even in the most advanced Christian, of continual vigilance against the infirmities and evil tendencies of our nature, and the temptations to which he is still exposed, and which he can resist only by divine help. The lesson is indeed true and important; and is inculcated, though not in this,—in several other parts of the sacred writings, as, for instance, 1 Cor. ix. 24—27. But we must never presume to distort the sense of any passage of Scripture for the sake of inculcating even a scriptural truth, which was not in the intention of the writer. In the present instance, however, the Apostle's words do not, and cannot inculcate such a lesson; for he is describing, not a man vigilantly watching against the frailty of his nature, and earnestly struggling against, and by divine aid, subduing it; but, on the contrary, one who is actually "carnal, sold under sin,"—brought "*into captivity* to the law of sin," —and not merely tempted to do, but habitually *doing* "the evil that he would not." And if this be understood as the Apostle's description of *himself* in his christian state, this, so far from inculcating the lesson of vigilant self-distrust and resistance to evil, would *put an end* to every effort of the kind, as hopeless, useless, and even presumptuous.[1]

The perplexity and hurtful mistakes resulting from the study of detached passages of Scripture, without reference to the general drift of the context, might be illustrated by many more, and perhaps stronger instances. Those here noticed were taken almost at hazard, as the first that I happened to recollect.

You will find frequent occasions for setting before your

[1] See *Lessons on Morals*, L. vii. § 3

people, cautions and explanations of the kind here alluded to; and there are few parts of your duty as instructors in which you can be more useful to them.

Human authority not decisive.

§ 2. In giving religious instruction to any class of persons, but especially to the class I have more particularly in view at present,—those just passing from the condition of children to that of adults,—I warn you—I do not say, against setting up yourselves, but, permitting them to set you up—as oracles,—as a decisive authority,—as a final appeal in respect of religious truth. You must not only incite and teach them, to read, and to read profitably,—to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the Scriptures, but you must leave and lead them to exercise the best of the powers of understanding that Providence has bestowed, to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is right;"—to allow to no mere uninspired man, or Church, or other Body of uninspired men, the claim either of superseding Scripture, or of possessing a joint and equal authority with Scripture, or pronouncing and deciding infallibly what is the sense of Scripture: but like the Berœans,[1] to "search the Scriptures daily whether those things are so" which we teach.

It might seem superfluous to set forth a principle which is the very foundation of the Reform introduced by our own and the other Protestant churches; and so distinctly recognised in our Articles; which declare the liability to error not only of Churches but of general Councils, (Art. 19, 20, and 21,) and disclaim the obligation of receiving anything as divine truth but what is contained in Scripture or "may be proved thereby."

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[1] The Berœans indeed might have been convinced of Paul's divine mission by the "signs of an apostle,"—the miracles which Paul displayed—even without resorting to any other evidence. But the belief in magical powers was in those days so prevalent as to render the prophecies always very important, and to some persons indispensable.

But persons are to be found who while they assent to such declarations, yet contrive to evade the force of them, and stigmatize as heterodox all appeal to private judgment, except their own judgment, and that of such as agree with them; setting up the claim either to *in*fallibility, or, with still more presumption,—a right to enforce on others the decisions of a *fallible* mind.

This apparently perplexing inconsistency may be unravelled and explained by asking the question,—when it has been admitted that the Scriptures are the sole unerring standard, and that we are not obliged to receive anything that "cannot be proved from Scripture,"—proved *to* whom? A "standard," *to whom?* If the Scriptures are the standard to *us*, the Christian people, and we are bound in conscience to receive only what is thence proved to *our* conviction, then, we are left in possession of the liberty of private judgment: but if it be meant that *we* are to receive whatever is proved to *your* satisfaction from Scripture,—if Scripture is to be the standard for *you*, but *your* faith is to be the standard for *ours*,—then, instead of liberty, you place on us a *double* yoke; you impose *two* restrictions instead of one; both, and each, calling for a miraculous attestation of your infallibility. We are required to believe, first, that whatever you declare, is divine *truth;* and secondly, over and above this, that it is a truth *revealed in Scripture;* and we are to take *your word* for both. "Jesus, I know; and Paul I know;[1] but who are ye?"

By such a procedure, uninspired and fallible men (whether acting as individuals only, or as a Body, makes no difference) arrogate to themselves an authority which belongs only to God and his inspired messengers; and the Creeds, Articles, Catechisms, and other formularies of a Church, or the expositions, deductions and assertions of an individual

[1] More exactly rendered "Jesus I acknowledge," (γινώσκω,) and with Paul, "I am acquainted," (ἐπίσταμαι.)

theologian, are, practically, put in the place of the Holy Scriptures.[1] The tendency is so natural and so strong, that it requires constant and vigilant precaution to guard against losing sight of the proper and legitimate use of Articles, Confessions, and other human compositions, and applying them to a different and an unauthorized purpose.[2] To decide what persons can or cannot be members of the same religious community on earth, uniting in public worship and other observances, is no more than it is possible, and allowable, and requisite, for uninspired man to undertake; and this is implied, and is all that is necessarily implied, in the ordinances and formularies of every Church: but to decide who are or are not partakers, of the benefits of the christian covenant, and to prescribe to one's fellow-mortals, as the terms of salvation, the implicit adoption of our own interpretations, is a most fearful presumption in men not producing miraculous proofs of an immediate divine mission.

You, that are engaged in the Ministry, will never I trust for a moment forget the solemn vows by which you are bound to "instruct out of the Scripture the people committed to your care," and to teach nothing as essential to salvation but "what you are persuaded is contained in, or may be proved by the Scriptures." What you are to teach, is, be it observed, not, whatever *others* are convinced, but, what *you* are yourselves convinced, is declared or implied in Scripture. Were you to inculcate what you were not yourselves thus convinced of, though it might chance to be, in fact, scriptural, you, nevertheless, having received it on human authority, would have been setting up Man in the place of God. And to repudiate this procedure is the grand fundamental principle of Protestantism. If therefore *you* are to *teach* as divine truth, that only which *you* are convinced is scriptural, it is plain you are to call on your hearers to *receive* as divine truth, *that* only which *they* are

[1] See Essay on *Romish Errors*, Essay IV. § 7.
[2] See Essay on the *Omission of Creeds, &c. in Scripture*.

convinced of as scriptural. If you direct them, or encourage them, or leave them, to receive doctrines on your own, or any mere human authority, you are sacrificing the very principle which you have sworn to maintain.

It is urged on the opposite side that it is a mockery to talk of the right of private judgment[1] in the unlearned,—that is, the great mass of mankind,—who have nothing on which to found an independent judgment of their own, that can deserve the name; but being ignorant and gross-minded,—strangers to the original languages of the Scriptures, and to ecclesiastical history,—unintellectual, unreflective, and uninformed,—must either acquiesce in the instructions and assurances of the learned men who bear rule over them, or else be "blown about with every wind of doctrine," without rudder or compass to direct their course.

The practical result of such principles as these, experience shows to be such as reason would have led us to anticipate. The guides, to whose authoritative direction the people are thus left, soon come to think that they themselves also may as well be content to follow the guidance of their predecessors, instead of being at the pains "to prove all things," by a laborious search into the Scriptures. They deem it enough to acquiesce in the judgment of the ancient Fathers; and to ascertain this from the statements of commentators, and compilers from the Fathers,—from abridgments of these compilations,—and ultimately, from brief compendiums framed from these abridgments; so that, in the end,—and that, no remote end,—the wise and learned, on whom the mass of the people are implicitly to rely, become *un*wise and *un*learned, there being no one to detect their deficiencies; ignorant of Scripture, of which they were left to be the authoritative interpreters,—ignorant of it, in fact, from that very cause;—and in short, "blind leaders of the blind."

It is remarkable that those who incur such results, rather

[1] See Hawkins's *Duty of Private Judgment*.

than concede the point of the right of private judgment, are yet *compelled*, nevertheless, to leave men to their private judgment after all, on deciding the most important questions. For those who, without displaying the decisive credentials from heaven, of plain miraculous powers, yet call on us to surrender our judgment to their guidance, *must* leave us to decide, whether well or ill, by our own private judgment, the momentous questions—first, whether we shall make that surrender to any human authority,—and next, whether they, or some others, shall be thus received as our guides.

The diversities, indeed, and errors to which private judgment is liable, in all matters not admitting of mathematical demonstration, might naturally lead some persons, following their own conjectures, to suppose, that in a divine dispensation, a provision is requisite, and therefore to be expected, for a power of infallibly interpreting Scripture, and deciding finally all questions that may arise; to be permanently established on earth, in some person or Body, whose authority should be ascertained and supported by unquestionable miracles.

But our conjecture as to what is requisite or reasonable, cannot alter facts. So it is, that no tribunal, possessing these miraculous credentials, does exist. Private judgment, however incompetent, *must* be exercised, well or ill, whether we will or no; for even those who are willing to forego the right of private judgment, and resign themselves wholly to another's guidance, are compelled to judge among conflicting claims, *whose* guidance it shall be. Whether they decide to inquire into and compare together the several appeals to Scripture,—to Tradition,—to the authority of the ancient Fathers, or of more modern divines;—or again, to adopt without inquiry the religion of their parents; or, lastly, to assent implicitly to the dictation of some one who professing to be emphatically, a person who "knows the Gospel," strenuously asserts his right to their submission,—in all cases, they do, and must, exercise, for once at least, their private

judgment, (however weakly and wrongly,) in deciding a question notoriously doubtful, and much controverted.

The right, then, of private judgment in religious matters, being one which God has not merely given permission that men *may* exercise, but made provision that they *must*, it is for us his ministers and stewards, to do our best towards training our people,—especially the younger portion of them,—to exercise their judgment rightly, and profitably for their eternal interests. In addition to all other instruction, we must also warn them of the responsibility that is thus laid on them: a responsibility from which we *cannot* relieve them, if we would; and of which they cannot divest themselves.

I am not, you will observe, cautioning you against teaching any one to receive his religion on your own authority, as infallible expounders of Scripture. I do not attribute to you the wish to claim any such infallibility; and, indeed, if any did go so far in arrogance as to advance such a claim, I am not so weak as to suppose he would consent to forego that claim at my bidding. But I am cautioning that you should (as I just now observed) not only *leave* but *lead* your hearers to inquire, and reflect, and judge, to the best of their power:—that you should warn them against that implicit and uninquiring deference for your authority, which many of your people, but most especially those young persons whom you have first initiated into the knowledge of their religion, will be but too ready to offer.

Trite, popular declaimers on priestcraft, are accustomed to represent one man as prevailing on several others to surrender the use of their own reason, and rely wholly on his; yielding a blind submission to his dictates, and induced by his persuasions to accept him as a kind of mediator between God and them. But the opposite representation is quite as often correct. Men will usually be more ready to thank any writer or preacher, who places them in a well-trodden road, which they have only to keep to, without looking on either side, than one who presents them with a *map* of the

country they are to traverse;— better pleased with one who saves them the trouble of thinking, than with one who *gives* them trouble, by inciting, encouraging, and directing their studies. Hence, those who have been used to look up to their minister as a man of learning and ability superior to their own, of eminent piety, and perhaps, of great eloquence, are in general strongly disposed to refer to him as their ultimate standard; and to conclude that as he may be presumed to have good grounds for every thing he says, they may save themselves the labour of exercising their own inferior powers, and give themselves up to his guidance without further thought. And the offer of this homage coming from those who gratefully love and venerate their Pastor, constitutes a strong temptation, not merely to the worldly and ambitious, but to a man of sincere piety, convinced that what his people have received from him, is, in fact, the truth,— fearing that inquiry might lead some of them astray from the truth,—and satisfied that, as it is, they are right and safe: not considering that they are right only by accident,—that even if their *opinions* be right, still *they* are not right in holding them;—and that he is sanctioning a principle, or at least encouraging a disposition, which is, at least, as favourable to falsehood as to truth;—that the setting up of fallible Man as a decisive authority, will lead many to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men," and others, when teaching what are, in fact, divine truths, to teach them *as* "the commandments of men; thus building the whole superstructure of faith on a false and unlawful foundation.

Christianity based on evidence.

§ 3. When I add that I think we should teach our people not only to understand the scriptural grounds of the doctrines they receive, but also the rational grounds for receiving the Scriptures themselves, that is, the evidences which establish their divine authority, so as to "be ready to give to every one

that asketh them, a reason of the hope that is in them," I know, that notwithstanding the apostle Peter's authority for such a procedure, it will be exposed to the scorn and ridicule of some persons; who deride the idea of laying the evidences of Christianity before unlearned hearers, as a thing impossible, and if possible, quite superfluous, as long as they acquiesce in our conclusions, and are troubled with no doubts, —who conceive that the mass of mankind cannot have, and need not have, any better, or any other, reason for holding the christian Faith, than Pagans or Mahometans have for *their* belief. For *they* also have the evidence,—such as it is, —of having adopted their faith from their parents, or their superiors in knowledge or in station; and often, of finding consolation and satisfaction in their religion; for you cannot be ignorant that the grossest and weakest superstitions have often proved soothing and gratifying to the ignorant devotee.

As far as regards the question of the possibility of persons of ordinary ability and education becoming Christians on rational conviction, we should recollect that the heathen among whom our missionaries have laboured,—in many instances not without success—will generally have insisted on some satisfactory reason being given why they should forsake the religion of their forefathers. And if there be any of those who have been brought up as nominal Christians, who are yet below these heathens in the disposition to seek, and the capacity to understand, a reason, it is for us to endeavour to impart to them some degree of intelligence, of rational curiosity, and of interest in the subject of religion. Else they will be likely to remain in many respects greatly inferior to those converts from heathenism. For 1st, they will be unable to establish or support, when occasion may require, the wavering faith of a brother; which the apostle manifestly considers as incumbent on the Christian; for he tells us not merely to *have*, but to be prepared to "*give*, a reason of the hope that is in us:" 2dly, should no such occasion occur, their indolent unthinking

acquiescence in whatever they are told, will be a faith that ill deserves the name: and 3dly, this faith,—such as it is, will be likely to be overthrown by the first plausible objection that may chance to fall in their way. The circumstance that the presumption is in favour of whatever is established, will have operated, through the stagnation of mind thence resulting, as a disadvantage.

"It might be hastily imagined that there is necessarily an *advantage* in having the presumption on one's own side, and the burden of proof on the adversary's. But it is often much the reverse. For example, 'In no other instance perhaps,' (says Dr. Hawkins, in his valuable Essay on Tradition,) 'besides that of religion, do men commit the very illogical mistake, of first canvassing all the objections against any particular system whose pretensions to truth they would examine, before they consider the direct arguments in its favour.' (P. 82.) But why, it may be asked, *do* they make such a mistake in *this* case? An answer which I think would apply to a large proportion of such persons, is this: because a man having been brought up in a christian country, has lived perhaps among such as have been accustomed from their infancy to *take for granted* the truth of their religion, and even to regard an *uninquiring* assent as a mark of commendable *faith;* and hence, he has probably never even thought of proposing to himself the question—Why should I receive Christianity as a divine revelation? Christianity being nothing *new* to him, and the *presumption* being in favour of it, while the burden of proof lies on its opponents, he is not stimulated to seek reasons for believing it, till he finds it controverted. And when it *is* controverted,—when an opponent urges—How do you reconcile this, and that, and the other, with the idea of a divine revelation? these objections strike by their *novelty*,—by their being opposed to what is generally received. He is thus excited to inquiry; which he sets about,—naturally enough, but very unwisely, —by seeking for answers to all these objections; and fancies

that unless they can all be satisfactorily solved, he ought not to receive the religion. 'As if' (says the author already cited) 'there could not be truth, and truth supported by irrefragable arguments, and yet at the same time obnoxious to objections, numerous, plausible, and by no means easy of solution.' 'There are objections' (said Dr. Johnson) 'against a *plenum* and objections against a *vacuum;* but one of them must be true.' He adds that 'sensible men really desirous of discovering the truth, will perceive that reason directs them to examine first the argument in favour of that side of the question, where the first presumption of truth appears. And the presumption is manifestly in favour of that religious creed already adopted by the country. . . . Their very earliest inquiry therefore must be into the direct arguments, for the authority of that book on which their country rests its religion.'

"But reasonable as such a procedure is, there is, as I have said, a strong temptation, and one which should be carefully guarded against, to adopt the opposite course;—to attend first to the objections which are brought against what is established, and which, for that very reason, rouse the mind from a state of apathy. Accordingly, I have not found that this 'very illogical mistake' is by any means peculiar to the case of religion.

"When Christianity was first preached, the state of things was reversed. The presumption was against it, as being a novelty. 'Seeing that all these things *cannot be spoken against,* ye ought to be *quiet,*' was a sentiment which favoured an indolent acquiescence in the old Pagan worship. The stimulus of novelty was all on the side of those who came to overthrow this by a new religion. The first inquiry of any one who at all attended to the subject, must have been, not,—What are the objections to Christianity;—but on what grounds do these men call on me to receive them as divine messengers? And the same appears to be the case with those Polynesians among whom Missionaries are labouring. They

begin by inquiring—'Why should we receive this religion?' And those of them accordingly who *have* embraced it, appear to be Christians on a much more rational and deliberate conviction than many among *us*, even of those who in general maturity of intellect and civilization, are advanced considerably beyond those islanders.

"I am not depreciating the inestimable advantages of a religious education: but, pointing out the *peculiar* temptations which accompany it. The Jews and Pagans had, in their early prejudices, greater difficulties to surmount than ours; but they were difficulties *of a different kind.*"[1]

On popular christian evidences.

§ 4. There is one circumstance which it is important not to overlook, as rendering an attention to the subject of popular evidences of Christianity more especially important in these times of renewed discussion between Romanists and Protestants. It is not merely that *every* controversy is likely to draw an undue proportion of attention to the particular subjects it relates to, and to divert our thoughts from others not less important:—it is not merely that the minds of Christians of different denominations are in many ways injured by being drawn away from the points in which they *agree*, and fixed exclusively on those in which they differ: but over and above all this, there is an important circumstance particularly connected with the disputes between Romanists and Protestants, and which is often unthought-of. It is, that *in respect of the great question at issue* between the members of the Church of Rome on the one hand, and all Protestants on the other, the advocates on either side may be perfectly sincere, without at all *believing in the divine mission* of Jesus Christ.

Of course they are insincere in professing themselves *Christians*, and believers in the *truth* of the doctrines of their respective Churches: but what I am saying is, that they may

[1] *Elements of Logic*, Appendix.

be sincere believers in what they respectively profess *relatively to the great question between the two parties.* For, that question is, whether the ecclesiastical supremacy and religious system of the Church of Rome, be, or be not, *legitimately derived from Christ and his Apostles,* and agreeable to their design. Now it is evident that one who disbelieves the divine origin of the christian religion, must yet admit that it *exists*—that it *had* an origin—that there was such a person as Jesus:—and further, that the religious system of the Church of Rome either is, or is not, at variance with his design;—that the Popes either are, or are not, usurpers of the powers they claim to derive from his will.

Some infidels may think the question too insignificant to be worth an inquiry, which of the parties is in the right: but that *one* of them must be in the right, is undeniable. And some deists probably *have* decided the question, one way or the other, as a mere matter of historical investigation; and have maintained, in perfect good faith, their own respective views of this question, without being one step the nearer to a belief in the divine origin of Christianity.

The case may be illustrated by that of Islamism. There are, it is well known, two sects of Mahometans, The Sheeas and the Sunnees, differing on the question whether Mahomet designed Ali as his successor. This question, which has led to many fierce contests, and has probably heightened the national and political animosities of the Turks and the Persians, has doubtless been examined by some Christians who have paid attention to certain portions of oriental literature and history, and has perhaps been decided in their minds, without their having the smallest doubt of Mahomet's being a false prophet. And however insignificant, or however difficult of solution, the question may be deemed, it evidently *has* a right and a wrong side. No one, whether Mahometan, Christian, or atheist, can doubt that there was such a person as Mahomet, and that he either did, or did not, intend that Ali should be his successor.

Now this is, so far, a parallel case to that of the main question between Roman-Catholics and Protestants. Besides all those who espouse the one side or the other, politically,—from zeal for the party they belong to, without any thought about the merits of the case,—besides these, there may be an indefinite number who sincerely believe in the legitimacy, or in the usurping character, of the Pope's claims,—in the unchanged, or in the changed, character of Christ's religion, as exhibited in the Romish Church,—who yet disbelieve, or have never troubled themselves to examine the claims of Christ's religion itself, to be from Heaven.

I need hardly remark how peculiarly important, in such a state of things, must be, an attention to christian evidences: how dangerous to take for granted that men are *Christians*, from their taking an active part (founded on a sincere and decided opinion as to the point at issue) in a *controversy* between Christians.

I would also observe further, that these are not times in which it is advisable (if it ever is) to dwell—as some do—chiefly, or exclusively, on the *beneficial effects* of Christianity—the support and satisfaction it affords to individuals, and its usefulness to political society—as the sole or principal evidence of its truth that is to be laid before ordinary readers. These considerations furnish indeed a strong *confirmation* of his faith to one who is already not only a firm believer, but a practically-sincere Christian. Such a one is alone able to perceive and estimate their force; and such a one, I may add, is alone able to set them forth, in the best way; in *conduct*, rather than in words. This confirmation is rather the reward of faith accompanied by obedience, than the foundation on which to build it.

And moreover, it is a mistake to regard this branch of evidence as particularly simple and easy, to mankind in general. It requires no small acquaintance with distant countries and ages; in order that we may institute a *comparison* between the effects of Christianity and other systems.

It requires also some powers of *discrimination*, to distinguish what are fairly to be regarded as the *effects* of any system, from the accidental accompaniments; — the plants springing from the seed *sown* by the husbandman, from the spontaneous products of the soil: — the wars *e. g.* among Christians, on religious grounds, from the *tendency* of the religion itself. And it requires moreover such a *moral taste* as the Gospel does not usually *find*, but *implant*, in the human mind.

But the sceptical and irreligious, though they may be bad judges of the alleged usefulness of Christianity, can perfectly well understand that this is just the consideration which *would* weigh with persons who did not themselves believe in the *truth* of Christianity, but thought it a convenient system for keeping the vulgar in subjection. Few readers are so entirely ignorant of the works of the ancient heathen as not to know that these maintained the national religions on the ground of their alleged usefulness to society; though the more educated part of them would have been affronted at being even suspected by their philosophical friends of really believing, themselves, the popular mythology. I do not say that they were *right* in thinking these superstitions useful: but that this is what they *alleged*, is an undeniable *fact*. And this is all that concerns the present question.

I cannot but think therefore that we are more likely to create or confirm scepticism in ten, than to cure it in one, if, in advocating the cause of Christianity to the ordinary reader, we dwell exclusively or chiefly, on the topic of its beneficial effects: a topic which not only *was* urged (however unreasonably) on behalf of the Pagan religions, but *may* be urged in behalf of any religion by men who — like the heathen philosophers — believe not the *truth* of what they advocate, though perhaps sincere believers of its *usefulness*.

I would suggest the reservation of this topic for the *close*, rather than the opening, of any popular treatise on christian

evidences. There are other topics of internal evidence[1] (to say nothing of the external) which are more calculated than this to arouse, in the outset, the attention of the careless, and to shake the confidence of the confirmed unbeliever.

Proper use of religious instructors.

§ 5. But if the christian People, (I can imagine it said,) are to exercise their private judgment in deciding on the authenticity and on the sense of the Scriptures, what need is there of clerical instructors? or what occasion for theological learning?

I will take leave to answer this question by citing a passage from a sermon which I published not long since:

"But is learning therefore useless? Far from it. It would take more than a whole life of the ablest and most assiduous student, *now*, to place him even *on a level*, in many points, with such plain men as those I have been speaking of, who were the *hearers* of Jesus and his Apostles. Let any man have acquired something approaching to that knowledge of the languages in which the prophets and Apostles spoke and wrote, which their hearers had from the cradle,—let him have gained by diligent study, a knowledge of those countries, customs, nations, events, and other circumstances, with which *they* had been familiar from childhood,—and let him thus have enabled himself, by a diligent comparison of the several parts of Scripture with each other, to understand the true meaning of passages, which were *simple and obvious* to men of *ordinary* capacity *eighteen centuries* ago, and he will be far more learned than it is possible for the generality of mankind to be now. He will also be a more learned theologian, in the proper sense, than any metaphysical speculator on things divine; and what is more, such learning, in proportion as it is acquired, is profitable to him, not only as a Christian, but also as a christian *instructor*. It will help him to explain, not indeed those things concerning God which the Scriptures

[1] See Essay on the *Omission of Creeds*, &c. 1st Series.

omit, but what they *contain*; to lay before himself and his hearers, not what God has thought fit to keep secret, but what He has revealed.

"Yet such studies as these will not give him an advantage over those early Christians of plain common sense and moderate education, who had read and heard little on the subject, except the writings and discourses of those apostles and evangelists whose works have come down to us. And what was, to these early Christians, the natural and *unstrained* sense of those writings, is what we should seek to understand and to believe, if we would have our *faith the same as theirs*."

In truth, there is even *more* need of a well-educated clergy, diligent and judiciously trained in acquiring and imparting sound religious knowledge, if they are to be *instructors*, properly speaking, of the people, than if they are to be the *oracles*, and supposed unerring guides. If you were to be appointed as pastors over an ignorant and unreflective People, who were taught to take your word for everything, and to regard it as a sinful presumption to inquire,—to reason,—to think and judge for themselves,—your acquirements might be very scanty,—your whole mental cultivation very deficient,—without much danger of the deficiency being felt and remarked. And you might compress into a few sentences, which might easily and quickly be learned by rote, (even by persons who attached but little meaning to them) a compendious summary of the tenets to be received, and the precepts to be observed, by your hearers, as the result of the researches and reflections of able, and learned, and pious divines, whose guidance ordinary Christians ought to follow. Your teaching,—if it could be so called,—would consist in continual repetitions, in very slightly varied expressions, of this summary of doctrine and duty, accompanied with exhortations to a compliance with it.

Far more laborious, (I say this without any fear of thus disheartening a minister really anxious to devote himself to his Master's service,) far more laborious is the task, of

qualifying yourselves, by sound learning, and mental cultivation, and habits of reflection, for the training of your hearers to the profitable study of Scripture; by explaining to them the general drift and design of each writer,—the sense of his expressions,—the significance of his allusions,—and the character and circumstances of those for whom he is writing; till the People, thus learning, "line upon line, and precept upon precept," with an earnest application of their own minds to the study, come gradually not only to acquire the knowledge, but to imbibe the character and tone of temper, which the Scriptures are designed to impart. The apostles and evangelists can teach and inculcate Christianity better than we can. Be it our care to lead our flock to the diligent study and clear understanding of *their* writings; and the chief part of our work will be accomplished.

Besides the other modes of employment especially suitable to you in reference to this branch of our profession, I earnestly recommend the habitual study of the original language of, at least, the New-Testament Scriptures. And let no apprehensions of being sneered at as pedants, anxious to make a display before the ignorant, of your slender learning,—let no dread of scoffers of any class,—deter you from imparting to your people such instruction and such advantages in the explaining of Scripture as you may be enabled to afford, by a careful study of it in the original. I give this caution, because I know that there are persons, of no small weight with a certain portion at least of the members of our communion, who deride with the bitterest scorn what they call the arrogant pretensions of young men just entering on the ministry, who must needs be telling their hearers on every opportunity, how such and such a passage reads in the original. No doubt a foolish or an ill use may be made of any knowledge, deep or superficial, on any subject. No doubt there may be pedantry in theology as well as in other studies: and it might be added that of theological pedantry itself there are several kinds besides that which has reference

to the original languages. But to avoid pedantry, and escape ridicule or censure for alleged pedantry, by consenting to forego valuable knowledge, or to abstain from all profitable use of it, would be too dear a purchase. And that a knowledge of the original language of almost any book, does enable us, by reference to that original, the better to understand and to explain to others the sense of a translation, no one, I suppose, can doubt, who has even a slight knowledge of any besides his mother tongue.

Explanations needed for the reader of a translation.

§ 6. Our authorized version of the Bible is a very valuable one; and indeed considering the time when it was made, its excellence is a matter of wonder.[1] But supposing it more than this,—supposing it to be completely perfect in all particulars, still there must be many expressions in one language which cannot be adequately represented in another.

Moreover, you will often find in our version two or three quite different words, of distinct etymology, employed to render either the very same word, or words closely allied, in the original; from which it cannot but result that in many cases, part of the force at least, of the expression will be lost. For instance, "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy:" no mere English reader would be likely to suspect that the same word in the original corresponds to "defile" and "destroy." Again, the verb "to love," and the substantive "charity," though, on reflection, the reader does perceive the connexion in sense, do not suggest this so immediately, so strongly, or so constantly as ἀγαπᾶν and ἀγάπη do to the student of the original. Again, when our Lord says, "every branch in me that beareth fruit, He (the Father) purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit;" and, "ye are clean, but not all," the discourse has usually an unconnected appearance to

[1] See Dr. Hinds's valuable treatise on *The Authorized Version*. See also a most useful little book, lately published (Bell & Doldy, Fleet street,) *A Companion to the Authorized Version*, by the Rev. H. B Hall.

the English reader, from his not at once perceiving the reference to each other of the words, "purgeth," and "clean," (*καθαίρει*, and *καθαρὸς*.) So also when Peter speaks of "*purifying* their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 9), it is apt to escape the notice of the reader of the *translation* that he must have had in his mind the words accompanying his vision; "what God hath *cleansed*," &c. (Acts x. 15). In these instances perhaps the translation might be improved, by using throughout the words "purifieth," and "pure;" but you will find innumerable other like cases in which the *only* remedy is to introduce some paraphrase, or distinct remarks and explanations. Again the title of "the Comforter" is usually regarded, even by educated persons, as so peculiarly the designation of the Holy Spirit, that they would perhaps be startled at being told, or might even be ready to deny the assertion, that it is applied to Jesus Christ. But the very title of Paraclete, usually rendered "Comforter," the scholar will find applied to the Lord Jesus, in 1 John ii. 1.

Then again, of the converse inconvenience, there are many instances: I mean where two or more words, of different force in the original, are rendered, sometimes unavoidably, by *one* in English. Thus, *ἅδης* and *γεέννα* are both rendered by the word "hell." Temple, again, is the only translation given of *ἱερὸν*, which included the courts of the Temple, wherein the people assembled, (and which they occasionally profaned by exposing merchandize) and *ναὸς*, the very House itself. "Priest" also is used (not indeed in our Bible translation, but in the Prayer-Book) in its etymological sense, as answering to (or rather *being*) the word Presbyteros; and again, in our version of the Scriptures, as the translation of Hiereus, the sacrificing priest of the Jews and Pagans; an office which, in the christian church, our sacred writers, with sedulous care, confine to Christ alone.[1]

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1 See Sermon on the christian Priesthood, appended to the last edition of the *Bampton Lectures*. See also Eden's *Theological Dictionary*, Articles "Temple," "Priest," &c.

Of this class also, you may find many instances which will call for explanations from you.

Moreover, there are many cases in which the want of variety of *inflections* in our language, occasions an ambiguity, which cannot easily be removed but by a circumlocution. For instance, "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are *lost;*" this expression might very naturally, — indeed *most* naturally,—convey the idea of something *past* and complete; —of persons actually lost. But that sense would have been conveyed by the word ἀπολωλόσι; whereas the word used is ἀπολλυμένοις;—persons "losing their way," or, as we say, "on the road to ruin." So again, the opposite word σωζόμενοι[1] does not signify persons who *are* saved, that is, who have been saved,—whose salvation is complete,—but persons in the way of salvation; as the Israelites were (in respect of temporal success) when they marched out of Egypt.

There are also some instances,—most of them of no very great importance—in which our translators have mistaken the sense of the original.

One of these mistakes is the constant substitution of the word "Devils" for "Demons" (Δαιμόνια); the word Devil (Diabolos) being the designation of an *individual,* and never used, by the Sacred Writers, in the plural.

Again, "baptizing *in* the name of the Father," &c. ought to have been "*into,*" or *to* the name:" (see Acts xv. 17) the original word being not ἐν but εἰς; which conveys a very different sense. The Latin versions, which have "in nomine" instead of "in nomen," have probably given rise to the mistake.

The expression (Acts ii.) of "*cloven* tongues" should have been "flames [tongues] of fire *distributed,*" ("dispertitæ," Vulg.); since διαμεριζόμεναι is neither the *verb* nor the *tense* which would have been used to express "cloven," (διεσχισμέναι).

[1] Acts ii 47.

The expression (in 1 Tim. vi. 5) "supposing that gain is godliness," is manifestly an improper conversion of the original; which should have been rendered, "regarding the profession of Christianity [godliness] as a source of emolument."

Again, the expression (in Phil. i. 5.) which is rendered "*fellowship* in the Gospel," means, as is manifest from the whole context, and also from the use of the proposition εἰς, (not ἐν,) *contribution* towards the gospel.

The use also of the definite *Article* was not well understood at the time when our version was made. Thus we find οἱ λοίποι, "the rest," rendered by "others;" οἱ πολλοὶ, by "many," instead of "the generality," — "the mass of mankind;" τὸ πνεῦμα, by, "that Spirit," instead of "the Spirit;" ὁ προφήτης, by "that prophet," instead of "the prophet;" τὸ ὄρος, "a mountain," instead of "the mountain:" and (in 1 Tim. v. 11) "*the* younger widows reject," (as if he were to displace some who were actually holding office,) instead of "younger widows decline;" *i. e.* do not admit such to office.

In some places this makes no inconsiderable difference in the sense: as for instance where Paul is made to address, apparently, (in Eph. i.) *two* classes of persons, "the *saints* that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus:" and again (in Tit. ii. 13) where he is made to speak of "the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," as of two distinct Beings: though the Original, in each case, plainly shews (by the omission of the second Article) that he is applying both titles to the same; viz. "those in Ephesus who are saints and believers[1] in Christ Jesus;"—"Our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

[1] These are the terms which—as well as "elect," "brethren," and some others —are employed to denote exactly what we mean by "Christians." This last title was never applied by the earliest Christians to themselves. The term (which was manifestly of Roman origin) occurs but thrice in the New Testament: and in each place, manifestly, as employed by those who were *not* Christians.

This, by the way, would alone be a sufficient disproof of the notion that the New-Testament writings were composed from some vague floating traditions) in

Again, (in John xviii. 15,) we read that, "Peter followed Jesus, and so did *another* disciple;" and it is a prevailing though groundless notion (quite at variance with what we read in Mark xiv. 50,) that this was John the apostle. But according to the Original it should be "*the* other disciple;" viz. Judas Iscariot; the only one who had been mentioned just before, (ver. 5.) And this makes the narrative perfectly clear and intelligible; for *his* being known to the High Priest, and having influence to gain admittance for Peter, is just what we might have expected.

In some places, again, though no one word is mis-translated, the exact, or the full meaning, of the Original, is not conveyed. For instance (in 1 Cor. i. 27), the words "are called," which our translators supply, should have been "were chosen as your *callers*,"—the "instruments of your conversion;" which is the sense evidently required by the context.

And again, Paul's rebuke of Peter (Gal. ii. 14) would seem to imply that Peter was then living in non-observance of the Mosaic ordinances; a supposition which is quite at variance with the fact, and which moreover renders the whole passage unintelligible. The true sense of the passage undoubtedly is, "If thou, though a Jew by nature, hast life (*i. e.* the christian life) on the same terms as the Gentiles, and not by virtue of thy being a Jew, why dost thou urge the Gentiles to Judaize?" This use of the word ζῶ is very frequent, especially in this very Epistle: (see ch. ii. 19, 20, and v. 25.)

And Peter, in the council at Jerusalem, (Acts xv. 11,)

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the second, third, or fourth century. Had this been so, the title "Christians," which was then in as common use as it is now, would undoubtedly have been found in the New Testament in its present application.

The Apostle probably chose to employ exclusively the *titles belonging to God's people of old*; in order to point out the more strongly the comprehension of Jews and Gentiles, with equal privileges, in one church.

When the Temple and City of Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the danger from Judaizing teachers nearly done away, this reason no longer existed.

which seems to have taken place immediately after this transaction at Antioch, uses, in substance, the very argument just before urged upon himself by Paul. On comparing together the two passages, in the Original, there will appear a beautiful coincidence.

In the latter passage—the speech of Peter—as well as in some others, the sense is obscured by not supplying the ellipsis which is manifestly in the Original. It should have been rendered "Why tempt ye God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples too burdensome for our fathers and ourselves? [when after all it is not through these ceremonial observances] but through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we [the Jews] trust to obtain salvation, in the very same manner as they, [the Gentiles.]"

So also the passage in 1 Cor. xv. 41, should have been rendered, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; nay, one star differeth from another star in glory."

The word "nay," or, in older English, "yea," has the force of "[this is not all] for;" or "[not only so] but." And accordingly ἀλλὰ is frequently thus rendered, and very rightly, by our translators; (see 1 Cor. iv. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 11, &c.) but the similar force of γὰρ they have overlooked.

Lastly, there are many instances in which words once very appropriate, have gradually slid away from their ancient meaning, so far as to convey to many readers an indistinct, or even an incorrect notion. For instance, when Paul says, "*I know nothing by myself;* yet am I not hereby justified," the generality of readers never suspect the meaning to be, "I am not conscious of any fault;" (viz. in the discharge of my ministerial duties) though that sense was undoubtedly what our translators meant to convey by the phrase; which is still so used in some provincial dialects.

Again, the word "preach" is a notable instance; having so much slid from its original sense of *proclaiming* as a herald, as to obscure the sense of every passage in which the

preaching of the gospel, — (κηρύττειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον,) literally, "proclaiming the good tidings," occurs. The sacred writers constantly preserve the distinction between "preaching" and "teaching:" — "announcing," — "giving *information* of an event;" and giving *instruction* to believers.[1] And our translators have also, *almost* always, adhered to this distinction; though the word "preach," having in great measure acquired, in their time, its secondary sense, there is one passage in which they inadvertently so employ it. When the disciples were assembled at Troas, "to break bread, Paul *preached* unto them," and as Paul was long *preaching*, the young man Eutychus fell down from a window, and was taken up dead:" the word διαλεγομένος should have been rendered "discoursing." To *disciples*, he did not in the strict sense, *preach*. So also it is not *our* business, in the strict sense, to "preach the gospel," except to any who, from their tender years, or from neglected education, have never had the glad tidings announced to them of God's giving his Son for our salvation. Our ordinary occupation is not to preach (κηρύττειν) but (διδάσκειν) to teach men how to understand the Scriptures, and to apply them to their lives.

The word "doctrine" again has come to signify at present the *substance* of what is taught, instead of (its original sense) the *mode* of teaching; which corresponds to διδαχὴ, doctrine, and is, almost always, so employed by our translators. For instance, "The people were astonished at his doctrine;" meaning not at the things which He taught, but at his mode of giving instruction; because "He taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

The last instance I shall notice is that of the words "edify," and "edification;" which have so completely lost their literal signification in our tongue, that it would be reckoned even an impropriety to use them in speaking of the building of a literal edifice; and thus the reader loses the

[1] See *Elem. of Log.* Part iv. ch. ii. § 1.

force and significance of the language of the sacred writers, who are perpetually employing this figure, as their favourite illustration, if I may so speak, of the condition of Christians; as forming, collectively, the Temple, succeeding that literal one on mount Sion; the Temple in which the Lord dwells by his Holy Spirit; and as being, individually, "living stones, builded up into an habitation for the Lord."

I must warn you, in conclusion, that whenever, in the discharge of that most important duty of imparting scriptural instruction, you are led to suggest, for any of the reasons above alluded to, any rendering different from that of the Authorized Version, or even to allude to any of the other Versions that are in use among thousands of our countrymen; you may, not improbably, be assailed by violent clamours from ignorant and superstitious bigots, or from those, who though themselves knowing better, wish to foster blind prejudices among the people, for fear of "unsettling their minds." There are even some who believe, or apparently wish the people to believe, that our Reformers, in their reference to *Scripture*, as the only infallible Standard, meant the present *Authorized Version*[1]—the Version, that is, which is *authorized to be publicly read* in Church:—a version which was not composed till long after the Articles were framed; and which, even now, is so far from being uniformly adhered to, even in our public service, that the Psalms in the Prayer Book, and the passages of Scripture cited in the Communion Service, are taken from an older translation.

But, in truth, they had in view *no* Version at all, composed, as all versions are, by fallible Man. They meant, that which alone is the unerring Standard,—the *original* works of the inspired Writers. *This* alone is, in strict propriety of speech, the *Bible;* what is commonly so called being, in reality, only a *translation of the Bible.* Our Au-

[1] See Bp. Hinds on *The Authorized Version.*

thorized Version, though presenting, I am convinced, on the whole, a faithful picture of the original, lays no claim to infallibility, but is itself to be tried by an appeal to the standard of the Original.

But some who are well aware of this, yet deprecate enlightening the people on this point. They would fain keep at least the members of our own Church—of a Church that actually uses two different versions—in ignorance of the fact, that there exist more than one, lest the unlearned should be harassed with perplexing doubts, whether there is any part of what they read that can be relied on as of genuine divine authority. And there are even some who, while professing great zeal for the diffusion of scriptural knowledge, yet would prefer, when that is the alternative, leaving hundreds of thousands of their countrymen to live and die in total ignorance of all Scripture, rather than that they should read any other than our Authorized Version!

In reality, the most satisfactory ground on which the unlearned can rely for the fidelity of any translation,—nay, for the very existence of the Original,—is, the *general agreement* among translators;[1] who are so far from acting on a concerted plan, that they are not only independent, but often even hostile to each other: whence arises the certainty, that no one could introduce either a spurious passage, or a false translation, without finding others eager to expose the imposture.

If any suspicion do arise of the learned combining to impose on the unlearned, it must be, when a jealous dread is manifested of these latter being shaken in their faith by looking into, or even hearing of, any other translation than what is set before them. For "every one that doeth evil, hateth the light." But it is not *given* to those who do not prize, for its own sake, truth, and fair open dealing, to perceive the ultimate inexpediency of all disingenuous arts and

[1] See the little Tract on *Evidences*, referred to above, Essay ii. § 4.

pious frauds. Honesty must be first followed for its own sake; and then our reward (not our motive) will be, to find it in the end the truest policy.

The few hints I have here thrown out on important points, will be sufficient, I trust, to excite in your own minds a train of reflections, of which some may prove not unprofitable, by supplying either incitement, or useful suggestions, or needful cautions, in the momentous business we are engaged in, "of building up our people in their most holy faith," by opening, through divine aid, their understandings, that they may understand the Scriptures, which are "able to make them wise unto salvation."

DISCOURSE II.

JESUS DESPISED AS A NAZARENE.

DISCOURSE II.

MATTHEW II. 22, 23.

He turned aside into the parts of Galilee; and He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, He shall be called a Nazarene.

IT has frequently been made a matter of remark respecting this passage, that the words recited by the Evangelist do not occur in any of the prophetical writings: and the question accordingly has been raised, what prophecy it is that he intends to refer to. Several commentators have given various opinions on the subject; but I shall mention only the one which alone appears to me at all probable; which is that Matthew had in view the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Christ, that He should be "despised and rejected of men;" a prophecy which, though differing in expression, agrees very closely in sense with the words used by the Evangelist. For we find abundant proof in the other parts of the New Testament, that the people of Galilee, generally, and most particularly those of Nazareth, were held in great contempt by the rest of the Jews. To be "called a Nazarene," therefore, and to be "despised by men," may be considered as even in themselves nearly equivalent expressions: but the prophecy that this should be the case with Jesus was not only fulfilled, but was fulfilled in great measure by means of the very event which Matthew is relating. For, the circumstance of Joseph and Mary settling at Nazareth, and

Jesus accordingly being brought up there, was the occasion that He not only was literally called and considered as a Nazarene, but also that He was on that very account regarded with prejudice and disdain by a large portion of his countrymen. Being usually designated, from the place of his residence, as "Jesus of Nazareth," it was taken for granted that He was a native of that city: a city from which there was no expectation that any prophet—much less the promised Messiah—should arise; and which was the last place that the Jews looked to as likely to produce even any eminent teacher. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was accordingly the reply of Nathanael, when Philip declared his belief that He of whom Moses and the prophets had spoken, had been found in "Jesus of Nazareth." Again, when Nicodemus remonstrates[1] with the chief priests for condemning Jesus without a hearing, their answer is, "Art thou also of Galilee? search and look," (*i. e.* in the prophecies) "for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." So also it is related just above, that when some of his hearers said "this is the prophet," — "this is the Christ," others replied — "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" "Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was?"

That He actually was born in Bethlehem, and of the lineage of David, was so far from being publicly made known among the Jews, that He was left to encounter the prejudice arising from its being supposed that He belonged to the most despised portion of the whole nation.

The unbelieving Jews, accordingly, have always applied to the followers of Jesus the reproachful title of Nazarenes. Christians, of course, they could not call them; since that would have been to admit that "Jesus was the Christ;" which was, and is, the very point in dispute. But they employed the term Nazarene to answer a double purpose:

[1] John vii.

besides being according to *their own* notions a term of reproach, it served to excite a prejudice in the minds of the *Romans* also, by tending to confound the Christians with a certain party of Nazarenes, who taught the unlawfulness of paying tribute to the Roman Emperor, and endeavoured to excite their countrymen to insurrection.[1]

The Jews therefore knowing that their Roman masters cared not about their *religion*, endeavoured to represent Christ and his followers as *politically* dangerous, by confounding them with a party hostile to the Roman Government. Hence they urged, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a *ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:*"[2] even as, before, they had accused Jesus Himself to Pilate, as "perverting the nation, and *forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*, saying that He Himself is Christ a King."

Thus, every way, and to all parties, was the name of Nazarene made the occasion of contempt, suspicion, and hostility.

What I have now been saying does not, you should observe, rest on any particular interpretation of the passage before us. Whether Matthew did or did not mean to refer to the particular prophecy of Isaiah, of this at least there is no doubt;—that the prophet does foretel that the Christ should be "despised and rejected," that this as well as the rest of his prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus—and also that his dwelling at Nazareth, and being thence considered as a Nazarene, did contribute greatly to the contempt and rejection of Him which actually took place.

Now it is important to observe, in reference to these circumstances, that not only were no precautions used to prevent these unfavourable prejudices from operating as they

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[1] See the mention of Judas of Galilee, Acts v. 37, and of the Galileans slain by Pilate, Luke xiii.

[2] Acts xxiv. 5.

did,—no care to guard against Jesus being considered as a Nazarene,—but it seems even to have been expressly designed that He should be so considered, and should enter on his ministry without any external advantages to recommend Him to men's notice.

It may be collected, I think, from the sacred historians, that Joseph and Mary had designed to settle in Bethlehem, but that their design was overruled by the course of events. Their first coming thither indeed out of Galilee, was, as we learn from Luke's history, a matter of necessity. But Jesus having been born there, in the city of his ancestor David, and with such extraordinary attendant circumstances announcing Him to the Shepherd near Bethlehem, and to Simeon, and to Anna at Jerusalem, as the promised Messiah, it must have been natural that they should be disposed to take up their abode there permanently, and bring up the Holy Child in the very place where these circumstances would be known and remembered. We are told indeed by Luke, that "when they had performed all things which the law of Moses enjoined," they returned home to their own city Nazareth. But this must have been necessary, supposing them to have designed (as I have no doubt they did) to remove from it finally, and make Bethlehem their home. Having quitted Nazareth suddenly, and with a design of returning thither, it would be necessary to make arrangements for a *permanent* removal from it to a new abode. It must have been after a second arrival at Bethlehem, a year after, that they received that visit from the Magi or wise men, which is related by Matthew.

This we may collect from the very circumstances recorded: 1st. from what appears to have been the *age* of Jesus, at that time, who was probably in his second year; Herod's command being to slay all the "children in Bethlehem *from two years old* and under," according to the time which he had "diligently inquired" (accurately ascertained, as it might be more exactly rendered) "from the wise men."

And we find this confirmed by the circumstance that Joseph and Mary fled in haste by night from Bethlehem into *Egypt:* whereas their departure from Judæa which Luke relates,—evidently quite different from this,—was a peaceable return *to their own city* Nazareth.

It seems therefore to have been an express design of Providence that they should *not* settle at Bethlehem. And accordingly they were still prevented from doing so, even when, on Herod's death, they were recalled from Egypt into "the *Land of Israel;*" that is the word Matthew employs, as including both Judæa and Galilee. The narrative seems to imply that there was still an inclination to settle in Judæa (*i. e.* no doubt, in Bethlehem), but that the fear of Archelaus, son of Herod, who reigned over Judæa, but not over Galilee, induced them to "turn aside," (that is the very word Matthew employs,) and finally take up their abode in Galilee.

We find here therefore every possible indication of a distinct providential design, overruling the plans formed by human agents, and insuring the residence of Jesus during his youth, among persons who were strangers to all the miraculous circumstances attending his birth; who knew not, for the most part, but that He was a native of their city, and looked upon Him merely as an ordinary child, the son of a man in humble station.

This view of the situation in which Jesus was thus providentially placed, becomes the more striking if we compare *his* early youth with that of John the Baptist. As they were brought up far apart, so the mode of their early life was no less contrasted.

There are probably many persons whose habitual notions on several points of Scripture-history are more influenced than they themselves are aware, by the representations of painters. Of these, the most eminent in their own art, have in general, when they have undertaken to *illustrate* Scripture-history,—from labouring under a great ignorance of the subject,—done more to darken, confuse, and pervert it. They

are too often blind leaders of the blind. Yet one is often, unconsciously, led astray by them, on account of their admirable powers as artists, and by the force of early association. A favourite subject with a great number of these is, what is usually termed a "Holy Family," in which the infant Jesus and John the Baptist are represented as companions in childhood: whereas they were brought up not only in different *houses*, but in *different provinces;* the one in Judæa, the other in Galilee. And while one was the reputed son of an artisan of not the highest class in a city of mean repute, the father of the other occupied one of the most respected stations at Jerusalem, that of Priest.

But the most important point of difference was, that John and his parents continued to reside among those who had witnessed, or heard of, the extraordinary circumstances attending his birth, and who knew that he was destined to be "called the Prophet of the Highest." Looking therefore on him from his infancy upwards as one who was to appear in an extraordinary character, and seeing him leading the retired and austere life of one under the vow of the Nazarite,[1] they were hence prepared (a circumstance which is strangely left unnoticed by most writers) to listen to him as a preacher as soon as he began his ministry: and accordingly they flocked in multitudes to be baptized by him, though he did not himself perform any miracle, and though he professed to be no more than the precursor of the promised Messiah.

Jesus, on the contrary, brought up among those who knew nothing of any extraordinary character belonging to him,—and not distinguished from his humble neighbours by any vow of abstinence, or other outward mark, was unnoticed by his countrymen till pointed out to them by John the Baptist, who bore witness to the supernatural sign which had been displayed at his Baptism; and when He commenced his Ministry, relied only on the attestation of the miraculous

[1] Luke i. 15.

works he displayed. "If," said He, "I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works." These miracles, we should have expected according to our own notions, would have forced all men into an acknowledgment of his divine mission, who were but convinced of the reality of the facts. But the degree to which, in those days, the belief prevailed in the power of magicians to work miracles through their control over evil spirits, incredible as it is apt to appear to us, is a fact of which there can be no doubt whatever. The evangelists all agree in describing the opponents of Jesus as admitting his miraculous powers, but yet as so determined to reject him, that they were driven to attribute those powers to the agency of Demons: "He casteth out Demons [devils],"[1] they said, "through Beelzebub, the chief of the Demons."

This, it may be said, is the account of *Christian* writers; but it is fully confirmed by the testimony of the unbelieving Jews themselves; who have among them a very ancient book[2] professing to give an account of Jesus of Nazareth; representing Him as a deceiver, who performed great miracles by magical art. And it is remarkable, that in this book, one, and only one, of the alleged miracles is denied, the resurrection of Jesus Christ; so minutely does it agree in this respect, with our Sacred Writers, who describe the unbelieving Jews as denying the *fact* of Christ's resurrection, but admitting the other miracles, and ascribing them to the agency of evil spirits. The prevailing notion among the ancients seems to have been, that a magician's power, however great, lasted only for his *life*. The *resurrection*, therefore, of Jesus utterly overthrew, in the minds of those who were convinced of the fact, the supposition of his being a magician.

How far the belief of the Jews in the present day agrees

[1] Demons is the original word, which had better have been retained.

[2] *Toldoth Jeschu.*

with the view taken by their ancestors, I cannot determine. The only one of them with whom I ever conversed on the subject, (he was a man of education,) distinctly gave me to understand that such was his belief. But at any rate it must have been their belief in early times, up to the days of Jesus Christ. For, it is incredible that if his enemies, during his ministry among them, had denied the fact of his working miracles, their descendants should afterwards, when He was removed from them, admit the miracles, and resort to the plea of magic arts. That would have been to reject the testimony of their own party, and to prefer that of the disciples, whom they persecuted; which is a complete moral impossibility.

The account, therefore, which the Evangelists give of this matter is fully confirmed; viz. that the unbelieving Jews of our Lord's time, acknowledged his miracles, and explained them as the work of magic. For if the unbelievers of *those* days had met his pretensions by a denial of the facts, that denial must have been transmitted to their descendants; as is the case, in respect of that one miracle they did deny, that of the resurrection.

And here I would observe, by the way, that credulous as the Jewish people were at that time on the subject of magic, they would never have resorted to *that* solution if they could have raised even any doubt as to the facts. For as long as it was admitted that He did display superhuman power, their explanation of this as the result of magical arts, only went to shew that He *might possibly* not be sent from God, notwithstanding his miracles: whereas on the other hand, to have detected Him in attempting any juggle or fraud, or in circulating false statements, would have been a strong argument that He *could* not have been sent by God.

Miracles then, we see, did not, even when fully acknowledged, force men into that acknowledgment of divine agency which we should at first sight have expected to follow. It appears to be a part of the scheme of divine providence that

men never *should* be forced into the belief of the christian revelation, by such overpowering evidence as shall compel the assent of the understanding in spite of all perversity of the will; such evidence as shall leave no room for the exercise of candour, — call for no diligent inquiry and examination,— afford no way of escape for those unwilling to admit it;— but, like the evidence of a geometrical demonstration, leave no distinction between the well-disposed and the ill-disposed.

Unbelievers of the present day may say, and probably with truth, — that if a professed messenger from heaven were to perform sensible miracles before their eyes, they would not account for these by the hypothesis of Magic, but would receive the message. As it is, however, they can deny the christian miracles without contradicting at least the evidence of their senses. The Jews in our Lord's time, as we have seen, could not; they therefore acknowledged the miracles, and accounted for them according to the then prevailing notions of magic.

Jesus *of Nazareth* had in that very title, as well as in the supposed obscurity of his parentage, a presumption raised against him. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" These were the questions that were asked, and which mark the prevailing sentiments: and the conviction which his mighty works did produce, gradual and hesitating as it was, differed widely from what we should have expected. Some said, "When Christ cometh, will he do *more* miracles than these which this man doth?"

But when He disappointed their expectations of a temporal Messiah raising their nation to liberty and glory,— when He rejected a temporal crown, and proclaimed a kingdom "not of this world," they were "offended," (as our translation expresses it) *i. e.* mortified, disgusted, and indignant, and resolving to disbelieve, changed the exulting shouts with which they had welcomed his entrance into Jerusalem into clamorous outcries for his crucifixion.

Thus did the Saviour come "unto his own, and his own received Him not;" thus was He "despised and rejected of men;" and thus were the prophecies fulfilled that not only "the Christ should *suffer*," but that the very circumstance of his being a sufferer should be interpreted as a proof of divine disfavour: "We did esteem Him smitten, *stricken of God*, and afflicted; and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him."

And are we, Christians of the present day, to regard all this with barren wonder at the perversity of the Jews, and at their superstitious credulity respecting magic? Is nothing to be learned from their example,—no application to be made to ourselves and those around us? Perhaps you may suppose that the only application is to be made to those of this age and this country, who are not *Christians*:—who equally with the Jews, though on different grounds, declare that they will have nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth.

But this is not so. Of the Jews, who were God's favoured people of old, a large proportion were (as Paul tells us) "Jews outwardly," because they had been brought up in the observances of their law, and taught to hate and despise Gentiles, and to place their religion in national pride, and in strict attention to outward ceremonies; but neglected "the weightier matters of the Law." They were sensual or worldly-minded, and unprepared to submit themselves with meekness to God's guidance,—to examine evidence candidly, —and to receive with humble docility truths unacceptable, and revolting to their prejudices and inclinations. They consequently so far blinded themselves, that professing and believing that they adhered to the Law and the Prophets, they rejected the promised Messiah, and thought when they killed his disciples, that they were "doing God service."

The same sort of characters, had they lived in this Age and Country, would probably have been brought up —as we have been, — professed Christians, through the accidents of birth and parentage. But as "he is not a Jew," — so neither is he a Christian, — "who is one

outwardly." They would perhaps have gloried in the *name* of Christian — or of Catholic or Protestant, orthodox or evangelical; and perhaps too they would have attested their religious zeal by their hatred and disdain of those of a different persuasion, or a different party, from their own. And as the Chief Priests and Pharisees in the council said with indignant contempt of the followers of Jesus, "this people which knoweth not the *Law* are cursed," so they would perhaps have said in these days, "this people who knoweth not the Gospel are cursed;" in each case claiming for their own party the right of determining finally *what is* the true sense of the Law, or of the Gospel. Such persons would have read the New Testament, as the unbelieving Jews continued to read the Old, with "the veil upon their hearts;" not seeking candidly and earnestly to learn what is the truth, and to apply what they learned to the improvement of the heart and life: they would, we may well suppose, have been as regular in the observances of the christian worship as they were of the Jewish: but they would not have been, from their being merely born in a christian country, more ready than in fact they were, to embrace heartily and practically the spirit of the christian religion.

In short, we may be sure that of the unbelieving Jews in our Lord's time, there were many who were against Christianity, because they found Christianity against them; —because they found it opposed to those prejudices and passions,—to that moral corruption,—which they could not bring themselves to strive against. And we may be no less sure that a large proportion of such characters will, in this age and country, be among the members of the visible Church, without being at all the less adverse to the true spirit of the Gospel from their not openly rejecting it. The same kind of persons who in former days would have regarded the name of Jesus of Nazareth with contempt or with abhorrence, these will, in the present day, be most of them enrolled among his nominal followers, but either disregard

his religion in their heart, or corrupt and pervert the spirit of it into a conformity with their own dispositions.

For we should remember that the unbelieving Jews of old did not intend to reject *Christ:* they intended only to reject *Jesus* of Nazareth, whom they would not believe to be the true Christ. Such a Messiah (or Christ) as they expected, —and as their descendants still expect,—coming from Heaven in clouds, and preceded by Elias in his fiery chariot, was regarded by them with the highest veneration. But when the true Messiah did come, they did not recognise Him as such; and rejected Him, because He did not agree with their expectations. And if He were now to come again on earth among those who consider themselves as his followers, do you not suppose that many of them would in like manner reject Him? Not that they would reject Him *as* the true *Jesus,* whose *name* they have been used to reverence; (any more than the Jews mean to reject Him *as Christ*) but there are many, I fear, who would not *recognise* Him,—would not believe that He *was* the Jesus they venerated; because He would be so unlike their expectations;—so different in spirit from themselves.

Whether this has hitherto been the case with any of us, it is for each of us to inquire most carefully for himself. For Christ has declared that He will own no such followers: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven;" and again He assures us that many professed disciples, even though they have preached,—nay and wrought miracles,—in his name, will be rejected by Him at the last day: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not: depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." We see then that Jesus reckons along with those who openly despised and rejected Him, such as do not in spirit and in truth obey his Gospel,—such as "professing to know God, in their works deny Him;" having "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

Since then Christianity does not consist in a mere name, or in a mere assent to the truth of certain propositions, without a subjection of the will, and a conformity of life, to Christ, recollect that if you do not seek earnestly thus to obey and serve Him, you will have incurred the guilt of rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as completely as the unbelieving Jews of old. You will have been so far worse than they, that you will have led *others* to "despise and reject Him." You may do, as professed followers of Jesus, what no open enemies *can* do; by raising a prejudice against the religion as useless, or contemptible, or odious, and thus acting as a traitor to your Master.

"Think not to say within yourselves," said John the Baptist, "we are Abraham's children: . . . . . bring forth fruits meet for repentance." "Think not"—he would have said in these days,—"to say within yourselves, we are God's People—we are Christians; but strive to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit." And let each recurrence of this festival[1] find you more and more "grown in grace,"—more truly followers of the steps of Jesus of Nazareth than the last;—more prepared to stand before his judgment-seat at the last day; that "when Christ, which is our life, shall appear, ye also may appear with Him in glory," and be admitted to dwell in his presence for ever.

[1] This Discourse was delivered on Christmas-day.

DISCOURSE III.

ON

THE TREASON OF JUDAS ISCARIOT.

DISCOURSE III.

MATTHEW XVIII. 7.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh!

WHEN the Divine Messenger—the anointed Saviour, so long and anxiously expected by the Jews, and so earnestly looked for at that particular time—did actually appear, "He came unto his own, and his own received Him not;" "He was despised and rejected" by the greater part of his own People, because He was not such as to correspond to their expectations and hopes. "They hid as it were their face from Him," and denied his claim; being, as the New-Testament writers usually express it, "offended" in Him.

The word which is translated "offence" or "stumbling-block," and which has been since transferred into our own language, being called "scandal," was used to express metaphorically any thing that impedes a man's progress in the right course, and causes him to stumble or to turn aside. And of this description were many circumstances in our Lord's history and doctrine; particularly his supposed humble birth[1] and obscure station, and the mean condition of his first followers; his renouncement of worldly power; still more, his submission to persecution and to an ignominious death; and most of all, the admission of the despised Gentiles to an equal share in the kingdom of heaven.

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[1] See note to Sermon on *The Shepherds at Bethlehem*, p. 146.

It seems to have been the design (over ruled by the course of events which Providence brought about) of Mary and Joseph to bring up the Holy Child at his real birth-place, where the signs had taken place and were known, that would have led men (as seems to have been the case with John the Baptist) to fix their attention and expectations on Him as He grew up. See the preceding Discourse.

He found it needful, therefore, again and again to prepare the minds of his disciples for this—to them unexpected—difficulty and opposition. It was a severe trial, not only of their *fortitude*, but also of their *faith*. I mean, that they were likely not only to feel, in common with every man, a natural *dread* of encountering opposition and persecution, but also to have *doubts* engendered in their minds (through this very circumstance) of the goodness of their cause. Brought up, as Jews, in the notion that temporal blessings awaited the righteous, and that temporal afflictions were a mark of the divine disfavour,[1] (a notion which still clings to the minds of many Christians, though *they* have not the smallest ground for it,) they were likely—over and above their natural reluctance to make great sacrifices, and their dread of undergoing severe sufferings, to doubt whether He who was exposed, together with his followers, to such affliction and degradation, could be indeed God's "righteous servant." They were tempted, in short, to regard Him "as one *stricken, smitten of God*, and afflicted," and thence (as had been prophesied) to "hide their face from Him." Hence, his assiduous preparation of them for this. He warns them that they should "be hated of all men for his name's sake;" and that they must be prepared "to take up their cross and follow Him." He bids them "rejoice" in the persecution they would have to endure in his cause; and he sums up the answer to the inquiry John the Baptist had made, whether He indeed were the promised Messiah, by saying, "Blessed is he whosoever shall *not be offended* in me."

Especially He warns them, more than once—and, for the present, in vain—of that great source of offence, his public rejection and ignominious death; which operated not so much in striking personal terror into those disposed to believe in Him, as in disappointing their hopes, and thus, as I have already said, shaking their confidence. All this, He warns them, *must* take place, according to divine appointment, as

[1] See Discourse on *National Blessings and Judgments*.

it had been foretold in the Scriptures; but then He warns them also, that this makes no difference as to the guilt of the agents who "fulfilled these prophecies in condemning Him." That a crime will certainly be perpetrated, and is clearly foreseen by one who has prophetic power, makes no difference in the guilt of the criminal. His act is foreseen, but not commanded; his evil disposition is known, but not thereby justified; and though it may not depend on each of us, whether this or that event shall take place, it does depend on us whether *we* shall have a share in it. It may be out of our power to prevent an evil; but it is in our power to join in producing it, or to stand neuter, or to oppose it; and we shall each be responsible accordingly; not for the *event*, but for *our share* in it.

The last clause of our 17th Article seems to have been added in reference to such as might attempt to justify their own conduct, however immoral, by a reference to the decrees of Providence, on the plea that whatever takes place must be conformable to the divine will. To 'do the will of our Heavenly Father,' must mean, to do what He, by the light of Revelation or of Reason, announces as *required* of us: otherwise, all men alike, whether virtuous or wicked, would be equally doers of his will. And where his will is *not* thus announced to us, our duty often leads us even to act in opposition to it. For every one would say that a child, for instance, does his duty, in tending the parent on a bed of sickness, and using all means for his restoration; though the event may prove it to have been the will of God that his parent should die. Pilate, on the other hand, was, in a different sense, fulfilling the will of God, while acting against the dictates of conscience. And we should remember that the prevalence of the Mahometan religion in many extensive countries that were once Christian, is, in this sense, the will of God.[1]

It is probable that our Lord, in saying "It must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom they come,"

[1] *Charges and other Tracts*, p. 438.

alluded especially to that which (as I have remarked) was the great and most important stumbling-block—the offence of the *cross*—the shock produced in the minds of the people by his being betrayed into the hands of those who put Him to an ignominious death.[1] When accordingly, the time was come, He again warns the disciples of the trial that awaited them, and foretels their weakness: "All ye will be offended because of me this night;" and He again denounces a woe against him who should expose them to that peril—the traitor who should occasion that offence: "The Son of Man, indeed, goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed: it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

There is no portion of Scripture-history more familiar to the minds of those at all conversant with the Scriptures, than this, relative to the betrayal of Jesus, and all the circumstances connected with it; but there are few parts probably which christian readers in general are less apt to apply to their own use. It is seldom, I conceive, that any one deliberately sets himself to try to profit and take warning from the example of Judas; or conceives it possible for himself to fall into any transgression at all like his.

No one, of course, *can*, in these days, be tempted to betray

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[1] In one respect it is impossible, now, to conceive the extent to which the apostles of the *crucified* Jesus shocked all the feelings of mankind. The public establishment of Christianity, the adoration of ages, the reverence of nations, has thrown around the CROSS of Christ an indelible and inalienable sanctity. No effort of the imagination can dissipate the illusion of dignity which has gathered round it; it has been so long dissevered from all its coarse and humiliating associations, that it cannot be cast back and desecrated into its state of opprobrium and contempt. To the most daring unbeliever among ourselves, it is the symbol—the absurd and irrational, he may conceive, but still the ancient and venerable symbol—of a powerful and influential religion. What was it to the Jew and to the heathen? The basest, the most degrading punishment of the lowest criminal! the proverbial terror of the wretched slave! It was to them, what the most despicable and revolting instrument of public execution is to us. Yet to the cross of Christ, men turned from deities in which were embodied every attribute of strength, power, and dignity; in an incredibly short space of time, multitudes gave up the splendour, the pride, and the power of paganism, to adore a Being who was thus humiliated beneath the meanest of mankind, who had become, according to the literal interpretation of the prophecy, *a very scorn of men, and an outcast of the people*."—*Milman's Bampton Lectures*, p. 279.

Jesus Christ in bodily person into the hands of murderers. And,—universally,—the cases recorded in all history, sacred and profane, are commonly contemplated without profit to the reader that regards them with barren wonder or curiosity, instead of anxious self-examination; because the temptations to men in different ages and countries are seldom precisely the same in all the outward circumstances; though in the main and in substance they completely correspond.[1] Satan does not appear again and again in the same shape; but is "transformed," we are told, "into an angel of light," and is ready, as soon as one disguise is seen through, to assume another, for the delusion of those who may have cast off self-mistrust, and lulled themselves into a false security. Even a brute-animal,—a beast of prey,—has more sagacity than to lurk always in the same spot of the same thicket, from whence to spring upon its victims. Much less can we suppose that our subtle adversary, who "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," will always present the same temptation again and again in the same shape.

It is for us to study the examples supplied us by history, and especially by Scripture-history, with a view to our own benefit in the application to ourselves; looking out, not for the points of difference only from our own case, but for the points of agreement also—of substantial agreement, under outward differences; and calling in the aid of a vigilant conscience to perform the office of the prophet Nathan, when he startled the self-deceived king, by exclaiming, "Thou art the man!"[2]

In contemplating then, for an instructive purpose, the case of Judas Iscariot, you should first remark that there is no reason for concluding, as unreflecting readers often do, that he was influenced solely by the paltry bribe of thirty pieces of silver[3] (a far less sum, probably, than he might in a

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[1] See Essays on *Errors of Romanism*: Introduction.

[2] See Lectures on *Types*; Lecture on *Judas*.

[3] Probably equal, in silver, to about sixty shillings; and, in value, to perhaps about twice that sum in the present day.

If we suppose (with some of the best commentators), Judas's views to have been such as here described, his accept

short time embezzle from the bag of which he was the keeper) to betray his Master, and to betray Him designedly to *death*. That Jesus possessed miraculous powers, Judas must have well known. Indeed he must, there can be no doubt, have himself, in common with the other Apostles, wrought miracles in his Master's name. And it is likely that, if he believed Him to be the promised Messiah, who was about to establish a splendid and powerful kingdom (an expectation which it is plain was entertained by *all* the Apostles,[1]) he must have expected that his Master, on being arrested and brought before the Jewish rulers, would be driven to assert his claim, by delivering Himself miraculously from the power of his enemies; and would at once accept the temporal kingdom which the people were already eager (and would then have been doubly eager[2]) to offer Him. That if our Lord had done this, He would have been received with enthusiastic welcome, as the nation's deliverer from Roman bondage, there can be no doubt; since He would thus have fulfilled the fondly-cherished hopes of the multitudes who had just before brought Him in triumphant procession into Jerusalem. And it was most natural for Judas to expect that Jesus *would* so conduct Himself, if

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ance of the bribe is easily accounted for. He must, of course, have represented himself, in his conference with the chief priests, as hostile to his Master. His acceptance of money from them (besides the incidental gratification to a covetous mind) must have been the most effectual way of blinding them to his real design.

[1] See Acts i. 6; Luke xxii. 24—30; and Matt. xx. 21—23.

[2] "It seems to be not improbable, that Judas, when he betrayed Christ, might have imagined, as the disciples did, and as the Jews thought of their Messias, that He would not have died, but either would have conveyed Himself out of the soldiers' hands, as He did from the multitude, when they sought to stone Him, or cast Him down a precipice; or by some other miraculous way, would have preserved Himself: and of this opinion, saith Theophylact, on ver. 5, were some of the Fathers."—*Whitby's Annotations on St. Matthew.*

It has not been generally noticed that our Lord's "hiding Himself, and passing through the midst" of his enemies, on those two occasions, must have been *miraculous*. And it is also worthy of notice, that it was from a *lawless* multitude He thus saved Himself: which no one would scruple to do. But the seizure and condemnation to which He *chose* to submit, were, however unjust, the acts of *legal* Authorities.

delivered up to his enemies. As for his *voluntarily* submitting to stripes and indignities, and to a disgraceful death, when it was in his power to call in to his aid "more than twelve legions of angels," no such thought seems ever to have occurred to the mind of Judas, any more than it did to the other Apostles. Indeed we are expressly told that when Jesus informed them of this beforehand, in plain terms saying,[1] "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished; for He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again," . . . . "they *understood not* the saying, and it was hid from them." His language, indeed, was explicit enough, and free from all parable or figure; but they were so persuaded of the utter impossibility of its being *literally* true, that they concluded at once there must be some hidden meaning under it, which they could not conjecture.

Partaking then in these notions, it was natural for an ambitious and worldly man like Judas Iscariot. to expect that by putting his Master into the hands of his enemies, he should force Him to make such a display of power, as would at once lead to his being triumphantly seated on the throne of David, as a great and powerful prince. And he probably expected that he should himself be both pardoned and nobly rewarded, for having thus been the means, though in an unauthorized way, of raising his Master to that earthly splendour and dominion, which, to worldly men, is the greatest object of desire.[2]

The same seems to have been the feeling of the soldiers who accompanied Judas. They offered at first no violence; but retired "backwards, and fell to the ground." It is, I

[1] Luke xviii. 31.

[2] It is eagerly contended by a certain Party, that Judas was all along an unbeliever, and was, from the first, designing to destroy his Master. The improbability of this theory is set forth in the Lectures on *The Apostles*.

believe, by many, taken for granted, that they were miraculously awe-struck. It *may* have been so: but no such thing is stated by the sacred historian; nor do his words at all imply it. It seems much more likely that they *prostrated themselves* to do Him homage as king, conceiving Him ready to accept the kingdom. For, if they had found themselves miraculously thrown down, they would not have dared, immediately after, to lay violent hands on Him.

Viewed in this light, there seems nothing unaccountable in Judas's conduct. His sordid and covetous character does not at all imply that ambition might not be conjoined with avarice in his heart. And destitute as he was of the true "wisdom that is from above," there is nothing to warrant the notion that he was deficient in worldly cunning. His calculations accordingly would have been not at all unreasonable, supposing Jesus to have been (as Judas, judging from himself, doubtless supposed Him to be) a person as full of worldly ambition as the far greater part are, of those whom the world designates as great men.

Julian, commonly known as "the Apostate," was forced by the mutinous soldiery, who were revolting against Constantius, to accept the empire, under the threat of becoming their victim if he refused it. Whether his reluctance was sincere or feigned, they probably anticipated his acceptance of the crown thus pressed upon him. Nearly the same was the case with Galba. Sextus Pompey is recorded to have rebuked his servant Menas, who offered to put him in possession of the empire, by the treacherous seizure of the triumvirs, for not having, unknown to him, performed the service which, when proposed to him, he felt bound to reject.[1]

No one indeed who has but a tolerable acquaintance with human nature can doubt that many an ambitious man is glad

[1] "Ah, this thou shouldst have done
And not have spoke on't * * * *
being done unknown
I should have found it afterwards well done."
SHAKSPEARE. *Antony and Cleopatra.*

to be spared the responsibility of spontaneously grasping at the empire which he would willingly find forced upon him.

Nor was Iscariot distinguished from the other apostles by the circumstance of his having no expectation or notion of a "kingdom not of this world." They were all equally in the dark on this point; and remained so, till Jesus Himself opened their understanding after his resurrection: perhaps indeed, even till the day of Pentecost.[1] "We trusted," said they, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel. And He rebukes them for being "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not [the] Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" But the difference between Iscariot and his fellow-apostles was, that though all had the same expectations and conjectures, *he* dared to *act* on his conjectures, departing from the plain course of his known duty, to follow the calculations of his worldly wisdom, and the schemes of his worldly ambition; while *they* piously submitted to their Master's guidance, even when they "understood not the things that He said unto them;" and patiently waited for such explanations as He should afford, without presuming to adopt any crooked policy of their own, to bring about what they desired. Ignorant of his designs, they obeyed Him with a resignation which was even the more commendable from that very

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[1] The extreme difficulty, to the apostles and other Jews, believers and unbelievers, in comprehending the notion of a kingdom that was to be (unlike the Mosaic Dispensation,) "not of this world," is often a matter of wonder and exclamation, to men who not only have before their eyes, but even themselves exhibit, a phenomenon far more wonderful. I mean, that of Christians, who *have* received the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, and have, in words, acknowledged his kingdom to be not of this world, and have before them his precepts and practice, and those of his apostles, and also the warning example of the unbelieving Jews; and yet still strive to *make* Christ's kingdom "one of this world;" by claiming for the civil government in a christian country, the right of determining what shall be the religion of the subjects, and of repressing false doctrine by secular penalties; or who seek at least to monopolize for Christians holding the true faith, civil rights and offices, and to reduce all others to a state of helotism or half-citizenship.

Let such persons consider whether there is not good reason for regarding Judas Iscariot as the founder of their system. See Essay I. on the *Kingdom of Christ*.

ignorance; and even when overpowered with dismay and despondency, and in that respect wanting *faith*, they were still not wanting in *loyalty*. They failed in confident *trust*, but they failed not in their *fidelity*.

One of the many additional confirmations that might be given, if needful, of the above account, is, that Judas was overwhelmed with remorse and horror, not, on beholding his Master *expiring on the cross*, but "when he saw that He was *condemned*." As soon as he perceived that Jesus *intended to submit*, voluntarily, to the cruelty of his enemies, without exerting his miraculous powers to free Himself, then it should seem that the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of Jesus Himself, flashed on his mind in their true sense, and in all their force. He was probably the very first person who understood clearly, and as if the words were branded on his heart, that "the Christ should suffer," and that while "the Son of Man was to go, as it was written," there was a "woe to that man by whom He was betrayed."[1]

I have dwelt on this case,—this most remarkable occasion of offence,—as peculiarly illustrating the precept of our Lord in my text; and as being, I conceive, more especially in his mind when He delivered that precept: "Woe unto the world because of offences." That great ["offence"] stumbling-block, which caused his chief disciples for a time to fall, He afterwards particularizes; "All ye will be *offended* because of me this night:" "The Son of Man goeth as it is determined, but woe unto that man *by whom He is betrayed;* good were it for that man had he never been born."

We are all of us, both clergy and laity, professed disciples of Christ, no less than those who accompanied Him in bodily person on earth; and if we expect not to meet with temptations,—differing indeed in outward shape, but substantially the same with theirs,—we shall fail, through false security. We have indeed this advantage over those early disciples;

[1] See Note G, at the end.

we have the benefit of *their example* before us, as an instruction and a warning. It may be said of them, as the apostle Paul said of the Israelites of old, "these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition: . . . . wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."[1]

But this benefit may be lost to us, and will serve but to aggravate our condemnation, if we neglect to apply to ourselves what we read. Duties, and trials, and temptations, belong to Christians of all times alike; and all alike therefore have need of vigilance. "Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?" asked one apostle, when Jesus had been inculcating the importance of such vigilance: after still further enforcing his admonition, he winds it up by adding, "What I say unto you, I say unto *all*, watch."

Both the clergy and the christian laity are often exposed to the danger either of *occasioning* an "offence," (in the Scriptural sense of the word,) *i. e.* causing others to fall, and turning them aside from the path of their christian duty, or, of *receiving* an offence, *i. e.* being themselves turned aside, through some obstacle or temptation that has been thrown in their way by others. But the former of these dangers is to be guarded against with double vigilance by christian *ministers*, because it rests with them to do more good or more evil, in this way, than, generally speaking, any others are likely to do.[2] Christian ministers are more emphatically the "salt of the earth; and if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"

But occasions will often occur when both the clergy and laity may be in danger of putting a stumbling-block even in the way of each other. For example, one of the greatest dangers to which a minister can be exposed is one to which

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[1] 1 Cor. x.

[2] "Beware that neither you yourselves offend, nor be occasion that others offend." —*Service for Ordering of Priests.*

his congregation may greatly contribute; and it may prove the means of their mutually misleading one another: I mean, the desire of popularity, and (what is to some minds much stronger) the dread of obloquy. As a *man*, every one must feel some wish for the good opinion of his fellow-men, and more especially of those among whom he lives; and as a *minister* of the Gospel, he cannot but desire, for the Gospel's sake, that his ministry may be acceptable to his people. He is always in danger therefore of being led to court their applause, and by little and little to make their judgment his standard—their approval his object;—to consult their tastes and inclinations, and to substitute the means for the end, by gradually accommodating the Gospel to them, instead of, them, to the Gospel. And this usually takes place by such insensible degrees, that he is not himself conscious of "loving the praise of men more than the praise of God: for he will seem to himself to be seeking the praise of God, and inculcating divine truth. His own natural self-partiality will tell him this; and the voices of those around him will echo it. It is a hard matter to defend a fortress when the assailants from without are in league with a part of the garrison.

The difficulty of the christian Minister's position is greatly increased by his having to steer his course between two opposite dangers; for if you cause any *unnecessary* disgust—if you fail to make Gospel-truth *as* acceptable as the *truth*, and the whole truth, *can* be made—you are occasioning offence in another way. And it is very possible to fall into both these errors at once;—to flatter one part of your congregation, and disgust another; to humour the taste and prejudices, and spare the besetting sins, of one party, who in return will load you with their applause; while in an opposite party you may be creating a distaste for much that is really true, by your manner of setting it forth.

Neither human applause nor human censure is to be taken as the test of truth. He who should satisfy himself either with being popular or with being unpopular, would equally

be taking Man's judgment for his standard. But either the one or the other should set us upon careful self-examination. I would say to the christian Minister, If you find yourself greatly admired and liked, or greatly disapproved by your people; or still more, if you find both—that is, if you find that you have divided them into two parties, of loud applauders and vehement censurers,—do not indeed at once *condemn* yourself, but *suspect* yourself; and examine afresh, whether you may not have made some sacrifice of divine truth to popular favour, or set forth some divine truth in such a manner as to create needless disgust.

And, to the People again, I would say, When you find yourself greatly admiring, or greatly disliking, some minister, suspect yourself; and examine carefully whether you have merely received the gratification of eloquence, or have had your prejudices flattered, or have heard something that you think more applicable to your neighbours than yourself,—or whether, on the contrary, you have been so instructed, or admonished, or reproved, as to be likely to be the better for what you have heard. And again; examine candidly whether something you may have disliked, is disliked as not being agreeable to God's word and to sound reason, or, as not agreeable to your practice or inclination; and for that very reason, the more needful to be attended to and laid to heart by you.

Though, to many persons, what is called popularity and unpopularity—public admiration and obloquy—present the greatest and most perilous stumbling block, there are others who are much more tried by a somewhat similar temptation from their own intimate associates, their private friends, and near relations. When tempted to make some sacrifice of principle in conformity with the feelings, and wishes, and interests, or the prejudices and party views, of those whom perhaps you love, and look up to, and live with, and when the alternative is to pain and mortify those you love, and incur the censure of those you have been used to venerate, and per-

haps to be shunned or persecuted by those you have been used to associate with,—when you have occasion to call to mind our Lord's warnings, "that a man's foes shall be they of his own household," and "whoso loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me"—then will you perhaps feel, that *public* favour or disfavour—the approbation or censure of the world abroad—constitute a far less grievous trial than this which comes home at once to all your inmost private feelings, and social and domestic life.

But this last-described trial is far from being the most painful of all, when it happens that those whose regard you are called on to forfeit, and perhaps to incur their enmity, are persons of a decidedly worldly and irreligious, or carelessly-religious, character: for then it will appear at once, to yourself and to others, that it is in your Master's cause you are suffering. This indeed is often even *too* readily taken for granted; I mean, that the disfavour which a religious man may meet with from the irreligious, which may sometimes be in part due to some want of judgment, or want of temper, in him, is often too hastily set down as persecution for righteousness' sake.[1] But the severely painful trial is, when those of your friends and associates whose displeasure you are called on to incur, by adhering to what your conscience tells you is right — when these chance to be persons who profess, and are believed, to be not only christian, but preeminently christian,—leaders—or zealous followers of those who are

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1 "We are bound to preach all the counsel of God to all men; but we shall not be blameless if we do this as if men were what they all ought to be: we must look to what they can bear; and preach and try to influence them in the way they can best bear it: we must search for arguments that will convince *them*, and not be content with what may be most convincing to ourselves: we must condescend to seek access to their hearts, as well as their understanding, by what ever means their prejudices or their ignorance may make necessary. Remember, we are *servants!* Let not the servant be above doing what the Master did. And O! if offences must come, how heavy will be the woe to that minister who shall have been himself the *cause* of any —who, by his life, or by any line of conduct, shall have made it harder for any disciple to bear the truth from *his* lips!" —Hinds's *Visitation Sermon*, p. 18.

leaders—in what is emphatically called "the religious world." Then, when you are in fact "suffering for righteousness' sake," instead of having the credit of this, you will be held up to reprobation, as ignorant of the Gospel, and an alien from evangelical truth; you will find yourself in a manner excommunicated, and bitterly reviled, by those who are nominally engaged in the same cause. You may be held forth to hatred and scorn as a traitor to your Master, precisely for refusing to betray Him; — for refusing to abandon, at Man's demand, what you feel to be your duty to Him.

I have often thought how comparatively light must have been, to the first disciples, the hatred and scorn of the *heathen*, as compared with the execration and persecution heaped on them by the Rulers of the *synagogues*,—by the most eminent and most religiously zealous of their Jewish *brethren*, who worshipped in the same temple. But more trying still must have been the opposition, and calumny, and vexatious persecution which Paul had to encounter from rival christian brethren who "preached Christ even out of envy and strife," and laboured to "add affliction to his bonds."[1] If any such trial as this shall be deemed good for you by God's providence, then indeed you will have need of all your vigilance to guard against being deceived by your own wishes; and of all your fortitude—that is, the fortitude which Christ Himself will supply to those who earnestly apply to Him,—to enable you to take up your "cross and follow Him;" without which you "cannot be his disciple."

I can hardly wish that any of you, my christian brethren, should be exposed to this fiery trial—this moral martyrdom. But if you *should* encounter it, and abide it faithfully, you will then be improved in character by the trial. If you remain, through Christ's help, unintimidated and unprovoked, —untainted with error, and undisgusted with truth, you will

[1] Phil. i.

come out of the burning fiery furnace, not only unhurt, but purified and strengthened.

To enumerate the various modes in which the Christian, and more especially the christian minister, may be tempted to *betray his Master,—i. e.* to abandon the straight road of his duty to Christ, for the sake of some seeming advantage, or to escape some painful sacrifice,—would be to go through almost the whole of the christian duties.

But my object has been to point out by some general remarks, and by a few instances, how certain we are in every age of Christianity to meet with offences—with stumbling-blocks in our christian path; and with what care, consequently, every Christian, and especially the christian Minister, must guard not only against being himself overthrown by those he will meet with, but also against contributing to place any in the path of another. It is the more needful to be perpetually reminding ourselves of this, on account of that which our Lord so emphatically dwells on in the beginning of his precept: "It *must needs be* that offences come;" "It is *impossible* but that offences will come." If He had held out the expectation that the trials and difficulties of the christian course would ever, in this life, be done away—that the road would ever be cleared entirely of those "rocks of offence," it might then have been almost too obvious to need mentioning, that a heavy condemnation would await any one whose conduct should tend to prevent this happy result. But he warns his disciples, not to expect this, and yet to guard no less assiduously against having themselves any share in the evils which would undoubtedly take place.[1]

Even this precept may seem to some, when stated generally, almost too self-evident to be so earnestly dwelt on. But when we come to practice, we shall find the application

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[1] "I know," says Paul, speaking to his own converts, "that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock; yea, even of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse [perverted] things, to draw away [the] disciples after them"

of the precept will be to some persons rather startling, and perhaps even scarcely intelligible. If, for instance, you, my christian brethren, and especially my brethren in the Ministry, make those exertions in your Master's cause which your duty to Him requires, you will, I suspect, hear many ask, with something of contemptuous wonder, "How can you be so *sanguine* as to expect to accomplish so and so? You think to bring about such and such results; but you will not succeed: your efforts to prevent such and such evils are very well-meant, but they are vain; the mischief is inevitable:" &c.

Such language, I say, you will often hear from persons who proceed all along on the supposition that you are *calculating* the *probabilities* of events; and that if these do not turn out according to your wishes, you will be surprised and mortified at finding that you had been labouring in vain. Let your reply be, that the *events* are in the hands of Providence, but that it is for your *efforts* in discharging your own duty, that *you* are answerable; and that so far from calculating on universal success in those, you have been warned that "offences will come." You may add, that no event can be itself *more* certain and inevitable than was our Lord's being betrayed into the hands of his enemies; yet this did not lighten the guilt of the traitor: and that the Prophet Ezekiel was commissioned to go to those who were described to him as a perverse people, and give them warning when they were ill-disposed to take warning: "Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear: for they are a rebellious house. . . . . If thou warn not the sinner of his evil way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hands; but if thou warn the wicked man, and he turn not from his evil ways, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

May God grant to us, my brethren in the Ministry, such success in our labour in his cause, as may give us reason to

rejoice over his flock which we are appointed to feed! But while saying, with our lips, and in our conduct, "Thy kingdom come," we must remember to say also, "Thy will be done!" I should be *sorry to think* that any one of you will *never fail* in any of his endeavours to do good. I say, "I should be sorry to think this," because it could only happen by his not *using* such endeavours as he ought. As long as any evil remains unremedied (and much there always *will* remain)—as long as any good remains undone (and much will be always wanting)—as long as any offence exists (and "it is impossible but that offences will come"), our efforts should never cease or relax. The best minister will, indeed, we may humbly hope, be blest with much success; but never with *all* that he aims at. *He* only is exempt from failures, who makes no efforts.

But WE serve a Master — the only Master — who takes the effort alone for the deed; who keeps the events in his own hands, and makes us answerable for the endeavours, and not for the success of them. And He has promised that, as far as *we* are concerned, our labours, if sincere and assiduous, shall not have been in vain.

"Be not therefore weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." And "when He, the chief Shepherd, shall appear," may we be among the number of those "faithful and wise servants whom their Lord when He cometh shall find watching."

> "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think — to God only-wise, be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages! Amen."

NOTE.

NOTE G, p. 222.

Peter's Denials.

I AM sensible that several important points, which have been slightly touched on in the foregoing pages, require a fuller development than the limits of a single sermon would admit of. I was obliged, therefore, to content myself with the hope, that on these points, I might suggest to the hearers (and now, to the reader) some topics and some hints, for their own researches and reflection in private.

In particular, that most interesting and most important portion of sacred history, the account of our Lord's betrayal, deserves a much fuller discussion than my space would allow.

You will find, however, in Whitby, in Matthew Henry, and in many other commentators, ancient and modern, (to several of which Poole's Synopsis will afford references,) interesting discussions of the principal questions pertaining to this portion of sacred history.

One point, however, which has much perplexed commentators, and of which none, as far as I know, has given any satisfactory account, seems to me to be a difficulty of their own raising. They are at a loss to reconcile Mark's account of the prophecy of three denials before the *second* cock-crowing, with that of the other three Evangelists who say, "Before the cock crow" *i.e.* before the *first* cock-crowing. And again, assuming that there must have been neither less nor *more* than *three* denials, they find it impossible to reconcile the accounts which each Evangelist gives of the three, without attributing to some of them great inaccuracy in a point on which they had evidently bestowed great attention.[1]

But on comparing together all the four narratives, and assuming each to be literally true (though no one contains *all* the circumstances), the difficulty vanishes. Jesus apparently must have foretold (in reply to Peter's confident professions), that he would deny Him before the second cock-crowing; and that, not once, or twice, but no less than three times; a prophecy which surely was not *falsified* if he denied Him ten times thrice. Peter persisting in his protestations, it is likely that Jesus repeated the prophecy, and *extended* it; foretelling that even before the first cock-crowing he would thrice deny Him. And each Evangelist records the fulfilment of the prophecy he

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[1] See *Lectures on the Apostles.*

had himself related, by describing three instances of denial which had come to his own knowledge. If any one of the four had related *less* than three, he would not have recorded the fulfilment of the prophecy. But it would have been unnecessary to have recorded *more*, how many soever may, in fact, have occurred, and may have been known to the writer.

Another of the prevalent mistakes relative to this portion of history, is to suppose that Peter was distinguished from the other Apostles by self-confident protestations; in which all the rest joined ("likewise also said all the disciples"); and, again, by his subsequent failure; though "all the disciples forsook their Master and fled;" escaping the denials of Peter only by not abiding the questions. But, in fact, Peter was distinguished from them by being the *last* to fail, and the *first* to be recalled: according to our Lord's prophecy concerning him: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you" (all of you), "but I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

I may observe here, that on this, and on several other points of sacred history, you will often find that the popular expositions are what have been adopted and retained, not on reflection, but from early habit. Some traditional explanation will often have become, from childhood, so blended in the mind with the text itself, as to leave no distinct idea as to what is, or what is not, expressly stated in Scripture. For example; the tradition that Mary Magdalene[1] had been, before her conversion, a woman of profligate life, (arising perhaps originally from the mention in Luke viii. 2, of her having been delivered from demoniacal possession,) is so familiarised to many people's minds, partly by pictures, and partly by the title often given to female penitentiaries, that you may sometimes find persons hardly aware that no such thing is anywhere stated in scripture;—who have never thought of doubting it; and who never heard any proof of it offered.[2] And something of the same kind takes place in respect of several other parts of sacred history.[3]

And not only amongst the least instructed and humblest in station

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[1] "Magdalene" was not her name, but only a designation of her abode. She was "Mary of Magdala."

[2] Since the first publication of this remark, I have seen somewhere, in print (I think it was a letter addressed to the Editor of some newspaper) a denial of it, and an assertion that Mary Magdalene's bad character *is* recorded in Scripture: the *Scripture* referred to being the *heading* in the table of contents of the chapters in our English Bible!

Of the popular error respecting Chapters and Verses I was well aware: but this instance of ignorance, in a person who could write grammatical English, I should hardly have believed.

[3] See a passage in Discourse I. § 6, in which the popular notion is alluded to, of John's having accompanied Peter when he followed Jesus to the High Priest's house.

of your hearers, but also in what are called the educated classes, you will sometimes find persons so entirely unacquainted with the contents—and almost with the very existence—of books (some of them by the most celebrated of our own Divines) not within the narrow circle of their own studies, that statements, expositions, and arguments which have been before the christian world for ages, will be exclaimed against, not only as erroneous, but as strange and unheard of *novelties*.

In the view which I have taken of the conduct of Judas, the reader will, I think, see more and more reason to concur, the more he examines and reflects on the subject. And as this is, I am convinced, the most correct explanation, so it is also the most instructive and profitable as a warning. I endeavoured accordingly so to express myself as to impress this on the hearers generally; not merely the candidates for Ordination, but the rest of that numerous and mixed congregation who attended the service. It was impossible however, (as I have above remarked,) to do justice to the subject within the limits of a single discourse. I would take the liberty of suggesting, therefore, to my younger brethren in the ministry, to call the attention of their hearers, in a series of discourses, to an examination of all the particulars of this most interesting portion of Scripture history.

And universally, as we ought, in the instruction bestowed on our people, to make the elucidation of Scripture our principal object; so, we should, especially, lead them, gradually, to understand, and to study with interest and with attention, the whole—and not least the historical part, which is the basis on which the rest is built—of the New Testament. A plain reader, of no high pretensions in point of learning or ability, may thus be trained to find for himself, through divine help, more, and more profitable instruction, than could have been supplied to him by the most ingenious abstract disquisitions, or the most eloquent general exhortations.

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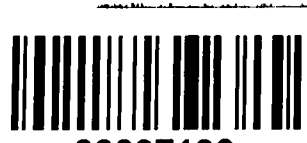
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